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New York

President: Mr. Lykketoft ..... (Denmark)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 122 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the United Nations system

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly considered agenda item 122 at its 29th and 30th plenary meetings, held on 12 October 2015. Members will also recall that, under this item, the Assembly adopted resolution 70/3 at its 38th plenary meeting, held on 23 October 2015. Members will further recall that, under this item, the Assembly adopted resolution 70/6, at its 45th plenary meeting, on 3 November 2015.

With regard to this item, delegations may recall that in a letter dated 9 August 2016, I brought to the attention of delegations a request for a formal meeting of the Assembly on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse.

While the General Assembly has benefited during this session from two informal briefings on this important issue, I agree that the overall significance for the United Nations and the potential impact on the reputation of United Nations peacekeeping activities and beyond warrant continued attention.

In this connection, I would like to propose that the General Assembly hold a debate on this issue under agenda item 122.

If I hear no objection, we shall proceed accordingly.

I am pleased to be able to convene this formal plenary debate of the General Assembly dedicated to a subject of the utmost gravity. Today's debate builds on two informal briefings held in April and May, respectively, which I convened on the subject of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Like all members, I am personally deeply appalled by accounts and reports of sexual abuse and exploitation involving international forces, including United Nations peacekeepers. When allegations point to United Nations personnel or soldiers deployed in United Nations missions whose job it is to protect civilians from harm, then it is particularly deplorable and shameful. As the Secretary-General has said, one terrible act can wipe out a thousand noble sacrifices.

Such acts are, of course, unacceptable under any circumstances, and it is critical that proper and swift accountability be guaranteed and that the needs of victims be appropriately prioritized and addressed. Such accountability will also be welcomed by the United Nations personnel and soldiers around the world who are deeply committed to furthering the values of the United Nations system and whose reputation and integrity are tarnished unfairly by the acts of a few individuals.

Making zero tolerance and zero impunity a reality is the responsibility of the Secretariat, troop-contributing countries, police-contributing countries and other Member States alike. I am glad, therefore, to be able to convene this important debate to assist the United Nations system and Member States in seeking ways

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to collectively act to improve the response to sexual exploitation and abuse.

I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Dabouis (European Union) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States; the candidate States Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the Stabilization and Association Process country and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area Liechtenstein; as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, all of which associate themselves with the following statement.

The European Union and its member States attach great importance to peacekeeping, which is one of the essential missions of the Organization and its main activity. We would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute once again to the hard work and commitment of all United Nations personnel who participate in peacekeeping operations. We also pay tribute to all who have lost their lives in pursuit of peace.

The protection of civilians is at the core of peacekeeping operations. The European Union and its member States have consistently and emphatically expressed their position on sexual exploitation and abuse, and we will reiterate it once more. A single confirmed case of sexual exploitation and abuse is one too many. We have also expressed our outrage after having learned from the Secretary General's February report (A/70/729) that it not only continues to be a major problem throughout the United Nations system but that the number of allegations has risen steadily.

Indeed, we are deeply concerned about the endless allegations. Our message is clear — it all must stop. We commend the Secretary-General's tireless efforts in implementing his zero-tolerance policy for cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, particularly the numerous stipulations on prevention, suppression, corrective measures and support for the victims. We firmly support the Secretary-General in his determination to play a central role in facing this difficult challenge, and we share the concern for ensuring greater transparency and accountability. In that regard, we welcome the specific information heretofore provided. We strongly support the inclusion of the issues of women and peace and security, as well as gender, in the operational planning of peacekeeping operations, especially as it relates to the prevention of and fight against sexual exploitation and abuse.

(*spoke in English*)

Security Council resolution 2272 (2016), aimed at preventing and combating sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeepers, is a welcome step towards a United Nations-wide approach to ending sexual exploitation and abuse and ensuring that those who commit such crimes are held accountable. General Assembly resolution 70/286, on cross-cutting issues in peacekeeping, was another major step forward in the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse. That resolution addresses the issue in a comprehensive and transparent way and provides the necessary tools to effectively enforce a zero-tolerance policy.

We are very happy that in June the General Assembly agreed to strengthen the Conduct and Discipline Unit at the Department of Field Support. We also believe that the conduct and discipline capacity of individual missions should be further strengthened. In many ways, training is the cornerstone of carrying out peacekeeping mandates. The European Union and its member States underline the importance of United Nations military and police personnel meeting the highest standards of behaviour. It is essential that the training of all peacekeeping personnel include predeployment and in-mission training on human rights, sexual and gender-based violence, preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse, and protection of civilians, especially children.

While the responsibility for prosecution and sanctions for these crimes rests with the Member States compring the troops, police or civilians involved, we have to work together to step up efforts to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, to investigate and take disciplinary action in a timely fashion and to ensure accessible reporting mechanisms and support for the victims.

We welcome the latest report of the Secretary-General (A/71/97), which provides an update on the initiatives undertaken across the United Nations system to combat sexual exploitation and abuse since February 2016. The European Union and its Member States share a zero-tolerance policy and therefore the zero-impunity approach for all civilian, military and police personnel in the United Nations and other international peace operations, as advocated by the Secretary-General.

We have to be committed in the long term to getting more and better-trained peacekeeping personnel into the system, to making sure that allegations are duly investigated and justice is served by the countries that contribute the personnel, and to providing victims with the assistance they require.

Let me conclude by saying that there is nothing more damning to crisis management and peacekeeping than when those whose role it is to advise, mentor, train and protect commit abuses themselves. As we all know, misconduct and abuse destroy lives and undermine the legitimacy of international peacekeeping and the trust of local populations in the United Nations in general.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): Mr. President, let me thank you, first of all, for convening this meeting. I have the honour to speak on behalf of Estonia, Latvia and my own country, Lithuania. Our delegations associate themselves with the statement just made on behalf of the European Union (EU).

We are deeply concerned that despite the long-declared United Nations zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse by the United Nations and related personnel, sexual abuses continue to take place. It is appalling that those on a mission to protect civilian populations in crisis can prey on the weakest and most vulnerable, compounding the suffering already inflicted on the victims of conflict. Such behaviour is a dark stain on the conscience of the United Nations. It tarnishes, as the President just said, the good name of thousands of peacekeepers and other United Nations staff who continue to serve in the most difficult of areas, including those who have lost their lives in the line of duty. It also puts at risk the lives of other peacekeepers in the field, since such abuses create mistrust and animosity between peacekeepers and local populations. It is time to stop talking about the problem and act on it with determination and resolve. We all have a role to play in bringing sexual exploitation and abuse to an end.

In that context, we appreciate the dedicated work of Ms. Jane Holl Lute, Special Coordinator on improving United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse. She has a formidable task and deserves our full support and cooperation. Her briefing during an informal General Assembly meeting on 13 May was encouraging and showed determined commitment to tackling the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse. Furthermore, the adoption of Security Council resolution 2272 (2016), the first of its kind, against sexual abuse by peacekeepers earlier this year, was a welcome step. The Council, which mandates peacekeeping operations, has the responsibility for the forces that it sends to the field and must make certain that the resolution is fully implemented.

Problems of sexual abuse and exploitation are not new. Ample recommendations therefore exist on the subject, as do various lessons and good practices that should be shared, analysed and replicated. There are, for example, the systematic predeployment and continuous training of troops and personnel, including on human rights and the protection of civilians; ensuring that force commanders have prior peacekeeping experience; having daily unannounced checks of the locations of contingent members, as India does; the deployment of national investigation officers as part of peacekeeping contingents, as in the case of Morocco, or the establishment of standby teams of national investigation officers, as in the case of South Africa; and the vetting of troops for a history of sexual abuse. A lot depends on the personal leadership and determination of force commanders as in the case of Malawi, which Ms. Lute cited in her May briefing.

Assessing the risk factors associated with every peacekeeping mission is important. Furthermore, as just noted by my EU colleague, the increased numbers of women peacekeepers and police officers, the deployment of women's protection and gender advisers, and human rights and gender awareness training have all proved successful and should be further expanded. It is crucial that all reported allegations be investigated fully and promptly. We welcome the Secretary-General's efforts to speed up the investigations and improve their quality. Viable complaints must be followed up and disciplinary mechanisms must be vigorously established in order to ensure accountability and deter potential perpetrators.

Some countries have conducted trials of abusers, including Egypt, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania and South Africa. That should become a regular practice, not an exception, on the part of the troop- and police-contributing countries (TCCs and PCCs). National jurisdictions, which we all cherish and respect, cannot be allowed to serve as a shield behind which perpetrators of the heinous crimes of sexual exploitation and abuse hide from justice. Assistance should be made available by the United Nations and regional organizations to TCCs and PCCs

in predeployment and on-site training, as well as in developing adequate legal and judiciary instruments to tackle impunity for sexual exploitation and abuse, including through disciplinary actions and criminal accountability measures.

In addition, better dissemination of information among the civilian populations is necessary so that they know their rights and to whom to complain in the case of abuse. Building trust between the United Nations present on the ground and local populations is crucial, so that the victims are not afraid to speak out and are protected from repercussions for speaking out against the abusers. We simply cannot build a case against the abusers if the victims are too afraid to identify those who abused them. Support and assistance to victims should be made a priority, and we welcome the operationalization of the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

At the same time, the United Nations system needs to change how it views its whistle-blowers. There should be no cover-ups, no deadening silence and no repetition of stories like that of Kathryn Bolkovac, who tried to investigate human trafficking during the peacekeeping mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina and lost her job, or that of Anders Kompass, who was suspended for exposing the sexual abuse of children by peacekeepers in the Central African Republic.

In conclusion, if the United Nations is to regain and retain its credibility and trust, including among those who have suffered or witnessed sexual abuse by United Nations peacekeepers and staff, the latest sexual abuse and exploitation scandal is one too many. It is time to finally make sure that the zero-tolerance policy is not merely a slogan that we repeat, but a comprehensive and vigorous action that we take. It is only through the collective commitment of the United Nations and its Member States that the protection of civilians, justice for victims and accountability for violations of sexual exploitation and abuse can be ensured.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to you, Sir, for the urgency you have attached to addressing the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse, at the behest of Egypt on behalf of a number of troop-contributing countries.

This debate was convened under agenda item 122, "Strengthening of the United Nations system", because of our concern over the reputation of the United Nations system, its effectiveness and its ability to carry out its role in peacekeeping. Despite the grave sacrifices that have been made by the United Nations and troop-contributing countries over the past 70 years, the heinous allegations concerning a very limited number of those troops require our collective action and response to these crimes on the basis of our shared vision and consensus on how to confront such crimes. In that regard, we must ask the General Assembly to act according to its mandate.

The February 2026 report of the Secretary-General on sexual exploitation and abuse (A/70/729) refers to the increase in allegations in 2015, which numbered 99, including 30 allegations made against United Nations staff members and related personnel; 69 against peacekeeping missions, of which 15 involved staff members of the United Nations Volunteers; and 32 against 49 personnel from troop- and police-contributing countries. These statistics accordingly reflect the fact that peacekeeping operations are responsible for a large percentage of such reported crimes, which the troop-contributing countries condemn and are determined to confront.

Efforts to that end began with the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, where we have reiterated our commitment to the zero-tolerance policy in connection not only with the allegations made against United Nations personnel, but also with all other reports received by the Organization. All discussions carried out among Member States reaffirm that our current and shared vision seeks to prevent the recurrence of this phenomenon. In collaboration with other Member States, Egypt will seek to achieve a comprehensive vision on how the United Nations can address such crimes. Those efforts should be aligned with the basic principles of justice, including the principle of the assumption of innocence before guilt is proven.

The crimes committed by peacekeeping troops represent a true crisis confronting the system in general and hamper their effectiveness. In the context of crisis management, we must address the root causes of this phenomenon, as well as the causes the increase in the number of allegations in recent years. For example, in long-term deployments, such causes may include a lack of entertainment for the troops and the proximity of their camps to civilians' residences. The troop-contributing countries share the responsibility for training their troops and raising awareness with regard

to United Nations policy that criminalizes sexual abuse. We must also ensure that there is no impunity and that we can prosecute those who commit such crimes in line with national laws and by taking responsibility for prosecuting those responsible.

I would also like to mention the vital role played by the Secretariat in maintaining a zero-tolerance policy for such crimes. We must continue our consultations with Member States, including the troop-contributing countries, and encourage the training of troops so we can achieve the objectives we aspire to.

In conclusion, the purpose of this debate is not for us to repeat our national commitments, but for Member States to agree to a joint vision in order to address this important and serious challenge and to identify procedures and measures that can confront those allegations and lead the way to immediate reform. Egypt therefore proposes that the General Assembly adopt a comprehensive framework to establish how the United Nations can address sexual exploitation and abuse at the seventy-first session under this agenda item, which should be included as a permanent item on the agenda of the seventy-first session. Later we can follow up, develop and update those procedures as necessary in implementing the zero-tolerance policy.

Ms. Bahous (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this important debate on one of the most significant aspects of peacekeeping operations and for giving all Member States the chance to take part in it.

Peacekeeping operations have recently been among Jordan's priorities in view of the increasing need for such missions as a result of the growing number of conflicts in various parts of the world. Indeed, sexual exploitation cases resulting from the actions of a few individuals have negatively affected the reputation of the United Nations. We thank those who have upheld the Organization's noble objectives for their efforts. We must also bear in mind that the important resolutions that have been adopted with regard to the protection of citizens, in particular women and girls, should be reflected in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1).

We must all work collectively to identify the necessary deterrents and impose sanctions on those peacekeepers, as well as all other United Nations officials, who commit crimes. It is important to address a number of aspects in order to prevent the recurrence of such acts and to ensure that we are able to effectively implement the procedures and hold those responsible accountable. I would therefore like to focus on the following issues.

First, Jordan would like to stress that all troop-contributing countries should commit to a zero-tolerance policy in cases of sexual exploitation and abuse. We must also respect principles of human rights, protect the dignity of all segments of society, adhere to the noble missions of peacekeeping operations and avoid distorting them.

Secondly, we must act decisively to hold those responsible accountable for their crimes and not effect radical changes in the whole methodology. We should not generalize or lump all peacekeeping troops from the countries of the individuals who committed those actions together with the perpetrators. That will have a negative impact, weaken the mission and have a negative moral effect on the other troops.

Thirdly, it is essential to reorient the training and educational operations of the troops towards respect for human rights and the protection of civilians. It is important that such training be mandatory for those who join United Nations peacekeeping operations. Jordan has established an accredited regional training centre to raise the standards of specialized training for those who join peacekeeping operations, including specialized programmes on how to protect and integrate civilians. In that regard, I stress the importance of integrating women into such operations and the role that can be played by women in peacekeeping. Jordan encourages the deployment of more women in peacekeeping operations in order to provide assistance to girls and women who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

Mr. Cardi (Italy), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Fourthly, sexual exploitation falls within the framework of the interests of troop-contributing countries, which are primarily responsible for their troops' behaviour and should carry out peacekeeping-related consultations, especially in cases related to sexual exploitation. Jordan believes that there are aspects of this subject that need more coordination, discussion and analysis, and should include the troop-contributing countries. It stresses the importance of strengthening consultations among these countries, the Secretariat and the Security Council in order to determine how to deal with this subject in all its

forms. We could also design a bilateral memorandum of understanding or a draft resolution in the General Assembly, or consider this topic within the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operatyions, which is responsible for discussing all aspects of peacekeeping and is the most appropriate and comprehensive forum for all members.

Fifthly, troop-contributing countries have the primary responsibility for prosecuting perpetrators of sexual exploitation. We therefore underscore the importance of fighting impunity, including through the enactment and implementation of national legislation to prosecute those who have committed such crimes. We must also take into consideration that national legislation in most countries does not allow such trials to be held in the field, and we must ensure that they are not. We would also like to underscore that we fully support the Secretariat in documenting and prosecuting these violations of humanitarian and international law.

In conclusion, I pay tribute to all the peacekeepers and officers who have served in peacekeeping and express our appreciation for the sacrifices they make every day in these dangerous environments to uphold the highest level of professionalism and maintain peace and security throughout the world.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate following the request made to you by Egypt on behalf of the group of troop-contributing countries, including Morocco. Indeed, my country attaches the highest importance to this issue and therefore welcomes this formal meeting of the General Assembly on sexual exploitation and abuse to reflect together on the appropriate measures to effectively combat this scourge, which tarnishes the imaged of both the Organization and the troop-contributing countries.

We reiterate our strong support for the zero-tolerance policy and are confident in the capacity of our Organization, with the support of its Member States, to effectively implement this policy in order to definitively eradicate this scourge. In that spirit, allow me to share the following aspects.

First, the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse must be approached in a collective and a holistic manner by all stakeholders, including the Security Council, the General Assembly, troop-contributing countries, the Secretariat and even host countries. Everyone has their role to play and responsibilities to assume. We therefore call for true triangular cooperation, which is crucial in order to effectively address this issue. In that regard, troop-contributing countries must be part of the solution and not just part of the problem, as they are today.

In order to define my proposals, I would refer to the guidelines proposed by the Secretary-General following the adoption of Security Council resolution 2272 (2016). These guidelines were given solely to the members of the Security Council. We believe that they should have been shared officially with troop-contributing countries in order to promote transparency and to ensure that they also had been informed of measures that concern them the most. I will not discuss at this time the content of these guidelines, which in certain aspects go beyond what was laid out in resolution 2272 (2016).

Secondly, it is crucial to take a look at all of the references and resolutions on this issue. We now have at our disposal resolution 70/114, on the criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission, a Fifth Committee resolution and a Security Council resolution, as well as sections of the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/69/19). This does not even include the different independent panels of experts and their reports. This situation requires us to manage a variety of proposals, best practices proposed by the Secretary-General in his annual report and the guidelines included in resolution 2272 (2016). We are also awaiting proposals from the Special Coordinator on improving United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse. We must now coordinate all these efforts in order to avoid confusion, and we believe that the General Assembly is the ideal forum for that.

Thirdly, owing to the worrying increase in sexual exploitation and abuse recently, serious efforts have been undertaken by troop-contributing countries and the Secretariat. It is now time to focus on the deeper causes and to seek appropriate and lasting solutions.

Fourthly, certain fundamental issues must be respected. Troop-contributing countries have the responsibility to manage their troops. We must distinguish between incriminated individuals and their States and we must separate them from their contingents to avoid collective punishment.

Fifthly, through the best practices proposed by the Secretary-General in his report (A/70/729), Morocco commits itself to implementing, as much as possible, all

the proposals mentioned, in particular on the following issues.

First, police and legal officers will be permanently placed in each deployed contingent with instructions to systematically and immediately move towards joint investigations with their United Nations counterparts. Despite this decision, we continue to receive notes verbales requesting us to designate investigators as quickly as possible, even in certain instances in which cases have been closed without follow-up for many years.

Secondly, with regard to assistance and compensation for victims, in the case of criminal trials, compensation is determined by the Moroccan court, but the verdict must be rendered by a definitive and legally binding judgement.

Thirdly, with regard to the other issues, Morocco has the necessary structures and fully collaborates with the United Nations in cases in which these procedures are decided by the competent legal authorities.

Fourthly, with regard to the establishment of a military court on sexual abuse, violations of common law are determined by the criminal code in Moroccan legislation, whose jurisdiction includes ordinary courts but not military courts. Therefore, the establishment of a military court in the field has no legal basis in my country. Its deterrent effect is rendered by a quick judgement within the competent national jurisdiction. The proceedings and the issuance of judgements will be carried out as quickly as possible and communicated to the interested parties, including those in the place where the acts were committed.

Fifthly, I wish to conclude by noting one of the most important aspects that we have already mentioned here, namely, the presumption of innocence. This universal principle is often sacrificed on behalf of the fight against sexual abuse. We have also had the opportunity to clearly express our view of the policy of naming and shaming. The United Nations cannot make public the nationality and identity of the members of the military who have been accused until they have been definitively proven guilty. Moreover, while we await the implementation of this principle, the United Nations must make public the results of the investigations, regardless of whether the individuals are found to be guilty or innocent. We must also recall that Blue Helmets are sacrificing their lives in the service of peace — an ideal that we all defend. We therefore express our admiration and support to them.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to reiterate my delegation's full willingness to cooperate with all stakeholders on this issue, which is fundamental to the image, action and principles of the United Nations.

Mr. Munir (Pakistan): We would like first of all to express our appreciation for the convening of this meeting at the request of Egypt on behalf of a group of troop-contributing countries, including Pakistan.

The scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping missions indeed has a negative bearing on the credibility of the Blue Helmets. The sense of urgency that we see on the subject is therefore greatly appreciated. Our collective aim, of course, is to root out this problem — one that damages the image, as well as the functioning, of a United Nations peacekeeping mission.

We appreciate the earnestness with which the Secretary-General is pursuing his zero-tolerance policy against sexual exploitation by peacekeepers. Pakistan, as a major troop-contributing country, takes its responsibilities as a troop contributor seriously. We therefore fully support the policy of zero tolerance. Protectors of the vulnerable under no circumstances can be allowed to become the abusers. This would be a travesty of justice, of morality and of the sacred covenant that these peacekeepers take. As a troop-contributing country, we have enforced and shall continue to enforce strict discipline if and when such cases surface. The primary responsibility of the respective troop-contributing country to undertake the inquiry and dispense justice must be fully respected.

While addressing the issue, symptoms and causes both need to be addressed. The Secretary-General's report on protective measures against sexual abuse and exploitation (A/70/729) refers to a number of contributing factors leading to sexual exploitation and abuse cases where the Secretariat needs to be vigilant. These include the rehatting of troops and the absence of predeployment training on standards of conduct therein; excessive length of deployment for certain contingents; the living conditions of contingents, including the lack of welfare and communications facilities; and camps in proximity to and not properly separated from the local population.

Of course, that is not designed to justify such criminal and heinous acts. On the contrary, the aim is to undertake all possible preventive measures to reduce the incidence of such cases. Such measures are thus

the shared responsibility of the Secretariat and of all of us. Most TCCs ensure that their troops go through a rigorous predeployment training regime and are made fully aware of their responsibilities regarding the maintenance of conduct and discipline. But in the rare cases where such incidents do happen, we firmly believe that collective punitive action runs counter to the concepts of justice and fair play and merits careful review. In principle, neither Member States nor their contingents can or should be held responsible for an individual's criminality. Similarly, a clear distinction must be maintained between accusation and conviction. Overly intrusive and prescriptive calls on Member States to review their criminal procedures and legislation should also be avoided.

The issue of sexual exploitation and abuse must be addressed collectively and holistically by the wider membership of the United Nations. Since our aim is to find practical solutions, it is essential that troop- and police-contributing countries (PCCs) take an active lead in such discussions and efforts. In that regard, we would like to make the following points.

First, we can adopt an overarching General Assembly resolution that comprehensively addresses sexual exploitation and abuse by combining the work that has been done in various committees, including the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34) and the Fifth Committee. Secondly, it is important to ensure that TCCs are consulted during the process of developing effective guidelines and mechanisms to stem this scourge. Thirdly, trilateral consultations among the Security Council, the Secretariat and TCCs and PCCs would be useful. Fourthly, we continue to believe that the C-34 is the appropriate forum for discussing issues relating to the conduct and discipline of peacekeepers. Lastly, any recommendations should be discussed and analysed in the C-34 in a transparent and inclusive manner.

As a major TCC, we remain fully committed to getting rid of those who are spoiling the reputation of the whole enterprise. We cannot allow the exemplary work of thousands of brave men and women to be sullied by the abhorrent acts of a few.

Ms. Bogyay (Hungary): The international community must not tolerate sexual violence, however it is expressed and wherever and whenever it takes place. We believe that by uniting our efforts there is no question that we can combat sexual violence in conflict situations, emergencies and humanitarian crises.

Hungary declared its commitment to helping to prevent sexual violence at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, and reconfirmed that commitment by issuing national pledges at the Security Council's October 2015 open debate on women and peace and security (see S/PV.7533). At this point I would like to sincerely thank Egypt, Brazil, Bangladesh, China, Ethiopia, India, Jordan, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan and Rwanda for initiating today's very important meeting.

The international community should pay even more attention than it already does to the issue of sexual violence committed by peacekeepers. Such acts are unacceptable under any circumstances, and we believe in and support the zero-tolerance policy of the United Nations. Furthermore, we should never forget that the goal of the zero-tolerance policy is to have zero cases, since, as is often said, one case is too many. In our view, to achieve that goal we should focus on three pillars for action — first, preventing such acts; secondly, uncovering and investigating them when they occur; and thirdly, ensuring that all perpetrators are held accountable.

From our perspective, it is crystal-clear that the single most important factor is taking very solid measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. It is our common responsibility to ensure that all troops, police and civilians in missions meet the highest standards of behaviour. All troop- and police-contributing countries must provide appropriate predeployment and in-mission training on conduct and discipline, and the United Nations has a vital role to play in helping them to fulfil those requirements. We also firmly believe that empowering women in peacekeeping missions is an essential tool for addressing sexual and gender-based violence and can contribute positively to preventing such crimes in the future. We would therefore like to see more official women peacekeepers and peacemakers strengthening and improving communication in that area.

Once such unforgivable cases have happened, they must be brought to light and properly investigated, since otherwise remedial action cannot be taken and victims will not get the support they need. When it comes to accountability, we must not forget that primary responsibility lies with the States. In that regard, States should work to build the necessary capacities and to

train their investigation officers, prosecutors and judges to effectively investigate crimes and conduct criminal proceedings, with particular regard for the special nature of crimes involving sexual violence and the sensitivities around them. We firmly believe that such crimes must be prosecuted and punished. We strongly support the policy of zero impunity for perpetrators and ensuring the accountability of personnel, whether military, police or civilian. Security Council resolution 2272 (2016) can also help to bring justice to victims as a last resort.

We cannot fail in our efforts to eliminate such crimes. We cannot let the actions of a few erode the heroic work of thousands of United Nations peacemakers. It is imperative to ensure that the international community lives up to its political commitment by taking concrete and measurable actions, and that it remembers the peacekeepers who are doing their jobs so beautifully.

Last but not least, I would like to commend the efforts of the United Nations peacekeepers who strive to bring peace to conflict areas while risking their lives again and again, and whose tireless work is overshadowed by the acts of a minority.

Mr. Stehelin (France) (*spoke in French*): We would first like to thank the President for organizing this meeting at Egypt's request. In view of the fact that the issue goes to the very heart of our Organization's values, and requires the commitment of us all, it is important that we can all come together to deal with it.

In the past, allegations of sexual abuse have been aimed at a number of United Nations peacekeeping operations and international forces. Our goal, affirmed at the highest level, is that of zero tolerance for perpetrators of sexual abuse, regardless of the type of force involved, the colour of their helmets or their uniforms.

I would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate our appreciation for the recent efforts of Ms. Jane Holl Lute, Special Coordinator on improving United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse. That work is vital, because it is designed not only to ensure a broad approach that is not limited to particular situations, but also to improve the effectiveness of the Organization and all its entities by harmonizing procedures.

Within the United Nations, we firmly support making strict implementation of our zero-tolerance policy a priority. In that regard, France, which is a troop contributor to peacekeeping operations, has contributed to the funding of the Office of the Special Coordinator and to putting a senior legal expert at its disposal. The Coordinator's first report included some interesting directions to be taken in the areas of prevention, training peacekeeping personnel, supporting and protecting victims, ensuring transparency and the communication of information, formalizing responses to allegations and, lastly, systematizing best practices. We would like to contribute as much as we can to a number of those efforts as we await the publication of her second report in the next few weeks.

In our view, the issue of the United Nations response to any accusations, on the part of all of its entities, is particularly worthy of further study, as is that of sharing best practices and information. In that regard, it is essential to ensure that the United Nations as a whole acts more quickly to transmit information — which should be as accurate as possible — to the States concerned, so that their national judicial institutions can work completely independently. In addition, the approach to accusations of sexual abuse by the United Nations, including public communications, should be carried out under assurances for the safety of witnesses and the alleged victims, but should also ensure the right to a defence and the normal legal precautionary measures to be observed in the area of criminal law.

For its part, in its national capacity France has already put into effect a series of measures that harmonize with those currently being instituted by the Secretariat. First, with regard to transparency, we have responded to the requests for information from every United Nations entity regarding the serious accusations concerning soldiers deployed in the Central African Republic. We have had numerous and regular discussions with them, both formal and informal. Naturally, they have to be conducted in full respect for the provisions of French criminal procedure that apply to judicial proceedings and that guarantee the fundamental rights of both victims and suspects, in accordance with the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

In the area of prevention, our armed forces have strengthened training on issues related to personnel deployed to overseas operations, all of whom now receive updated and comprehensive training that also meets French standards on United Nations policy aimed at combating sexual abuse. Regarding investigations and establishment of the facts, and in accordance with

Security Council resolution 2272 (2016), our Ministry of Defence is taking the necessary steps, including by deploying national investigative officers, to shorten investigation times. We have the capacity for carrying out independent inquiries wherever French troops are deployed. At the same time, the French judiciary is increasing its exchanges on judicial cooperation with the United Nations. The United Nations must ensure that it transmits all the elements needed for judicial investigations if they are to be carried out successfully, with all possible speed and in full respect for legal guarantees, since we firmly believe that what is crucial for the victims is identifying the perpetrators and rendering them harmless as soon as the facts have been established.

As the French authorities at the highest levels have emphasized publicly on numerous occasions, we are determined to investigate the accusations that have been made against our armed forces as thoroughly as possible. In an address in May to the French military serving in the Central African Republic, President François Hollande reiterated that he had demanded that the truth be established, because, he said, it was a matter of honour for him and for all of France, and he would not allow any stain on the French uniform and flag. If there were perpetrators, he went on, they would be severely punished, but if there were none, the truth must be proclaimed. The French judicial authorities have been seized of the matter and the legal proceedings are under way, in full respect for the independence of the judiciary.

The fight against sexual abuse is a top priority, but it does not mean that we should blame an entire peacekeeping operation, let alone the Blue Helmets as a whole. All of us here know how vital international forces have been and remain to many countries in conflict situations. What was accomplished in the Central African Republic, for example — according to the United Nations itself — was nothing less than the prevention of a pregenocidal situation. Wherever they are, peacekeeping operations deserve our full support. Far from discrediting them, we should be finding concrete ways to improve the protection of civilians everywhere. That should be our collective priority, and I can assure the Assembly that France will continue to make every effort towards it.

Mr. Thöresson (Sweden): I would like to begin by thanking the President for organizing this debate on a very important and urgent matter.

Sweden aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union, but I would like to make four brief points in my national capacity.

First, United Nations personnel, whether troops, police or civilians working under the United Nations flag, represent the highest ideals of the Organization, wherever in the world they are deployed. But in recent years, incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse have seriously undermined the United Nations as a whole. It must therefore be re-emphasized that sexual exploitation or abuse committed by United Nations personnel is a scourge. It raises a question of trust in the United Nations system as a whole, of its credibility and of the ideals it represents. The protectors must never become perpetrators.

And yet it is important to remember that such incidents are not new. We, the international community, must now turn words into deeds and act according to our own zero-tolerance policy on sexual abuse and exploitation. Our response must put the victims first. They must be protected and heard, and all allegations must be taken seriously. All suspected crimes and violations must be properly investigated and their perpetrators brought to justice. Victims must be provided with redress and reparations. Furthermore, it is crucial to apply a gender perspective when analysing a situation on the ground in order to enhance compliance and strengthen protection for individuals.

Secondly, the United Nations system must act as one in the follow-up to any allegations. Mitigating measures must involve all groups of personnel and all relevant offices. The horrible acts of a few have consequences for all the rest. They seriously harm the reputation and security of United Nations personnel and peacekeepers, when the vast majority, of course, do not commit any crimes. Equally, Member States are responsible for ensuring that such allegations are properly investigated and that those responsible are brought to justice. Ensuring that troops, police and civilians are properly trained is equally important in order to prevent such crimes from happening in the first place. The impression of an impunity gap remains a serious problem in the relationship between the United Nations and local communities, and for the overall credibility of our Organization.

Sweden is working actively to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in a United Nations context.

Capacity-building is crucial, and Sweden trains military police and civilian personnel both from Sweden and from other countries, through the Swedish Armed Forces International Centre and the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations. The issue of sexual exploitation and abuse is also an integrated aspect and key learning objective of the International Police Officer Course, and it is vital to ensure that all police pass that course before deployment. The Swedish police are also putting a primary focus on the issue in the upcoming United Nations police chief training course, and we promote full implementation of the agenda on women and peace and security as a tool for reshaping both peace processes and peacekeeping.

Thirdly, we welcome the leadership of the Secretary-General in implementing his zero-tolerance policy. The enforcement and follow-up of the zero-tolerance policy must be strengthened. The adoption of Security Council resolution 2272 (2016) and the repatriation of troops are important steps. We appreciate the annual report of the Secretary-General, including the introduction of country-specific information (A/70/729).

We also welcome the recent report of the Secretary-General on combating sexual exploitation and abuse (A/71/97). We are looking forward to discussing the report of the Secretary-General in more detail in the Fifth Committee, as well as to continuing to work on the related issues of criminal accountability in the Sixth Committee. In this context, the work of the Special Coordinator is of great importance, and we encourage an extension of the mandate of her Office.

Finally, we all know that many instances of abuse and exploitation go unreported. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that whistleblowers and informants be protected by this Organization. We need to combine efforts to break the silence and combat impunity while improving effective mechanisms for the protection, security and dignity of survivors and witnesses. The United Nations response to dealing with sexual exploitation and abuse has to be effective and forceful.

Mr. Sandoval Mendiolea (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Mexico thanks President Lykketoft for having convened this meeting and appreciates this opportunity to address this important issue in the General Assembly. We acknowledge that sexual exploitation and abuse are unacceptable and constitute serious violations of human rights and international law. When such acts are linked with the Organization's peacekeeping activities, they undermine its legitimacy, good reputation and effectiveness.

Mexico welcomes and supports the renewed and integrated approach focused on human rights that the Secretary-General has recently adopted to confront and prevent these problems. In particular, we believe that it is essential to maintain a zero-tolerance policy in the face of sexual exploitation and abuse by civilian or military members of peacekeeping operations or any other force that has been authorized by the Security Council to act, and to bring to justice those responsible for violations.

With regard to accountability, we support the position that States whose forces are on the lists of the annual reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict and on conflict-related sexual violence should not be authorized to provide contingents to peacekeeping operations until they have been removed from those lists. Similarly, we commend the adoption of Security Council resolution 2272 (2016) and the appointment by the Secretary-General of Ms. Jane Holl Lute as Special Coordinator on improving United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse. The work carried out by Ms. Lute towards achieving a coordinated and comprehensive response to this challenge is crucial. We therefore view with interest the possibility of extending the mandate of her Office in order to guarantee continuity and strengthen the actions that have been initiated.

Despite all this, more than a decade after the United Nations began to systematically tackle this problem, which causes irreparable damage to victims and tarnishes the image and reputation of the Organization, many challenges remain. Regrettably, the United Nations response, in some cases, has not met the expectations of Member States. Mexico believes that the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse cannot be successful without the active participation and commitment of all Member States to cooperate with the United Nations in carrying out comprehensive efforts at all levels to prevent these inadmissible acts from being repeated. In that connection, we stress the joint responsibility of the Secretariat and troop- and police-contributing countries for strengthening training in United Nations standards of conduct and human rights, both predeployment and on the ground, as well as the standards of preselection and systematic background checks for the entire deployed staff. Mexico has assiduously implemented those measures

in its participation in peacekeeping operations where it has deployed personnel.

Mexico agrees that priority must be given to the greater participation of women in peacekeeping operations, because their work helps to promote greater confidence and strengthen the protection of civilians, which lead to better responses to the problem. In the same vein, we must also look at risk factors in order to prevent acts of sexual exploitation and abuse from being committed by United Nations personnel, including by undertaking a review of prolonged rotation periods, recreational activities and programmes for the well-being of the personnel.

Mexico believes that the General Assembly must continue to play a fundamental role in the design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review of the coordinated actions that the United Nations is undertaking at all levels through the Fourth Committee, the Fifth Committee and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. Of special importance are the measures adopted in June by the Fifth Committee, which are key guidelines for the Secretariat on the priorities of Member States to ensure and strengthen the United Nations response to cases of sexual exploitation and abuse.

For all these reasons, Mexico views with interest the possibility of including this topic on the agenda of the General Assembly and having that body continue to address and take systematic actions with regard to this baleful issue.

Mr. Logar (Slovenia): I would like to thank President Lykketoft for coordinating this formal meeting and Egypt for proposing that it be convened under agenda item 122, "Strengthening of the United Nations system".

Slovenia also aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union and, in my national capacity, I would like to make some additional comments.

As stated in the President's letter, the General Assembly has already held two informal briefings followed by an exchange between Member States and the representatives of the Secretariat this year. However, alarming reports of violations of human rights and sexual abuse carried out by individual members of United Nations peacekeeping personnel continue to pose serious concern and cast a shadow on the honourable service and sacrifice of the majority of peacekeepers.

The majority of the victims are women, children and members of other vulnerable groups. Slovenia therefore pays particular attention to the promotion and protection of human rights of these members of our society. At the national level, Slovenia has already adopted several laws and other legal acts that include rules on the notification and investigation of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as on disciplinary, pre-criminal and criminal proceedings in such cases. Slovenia has, in this regard, also put additional emphasis on the importance of proper predeployment training, which includes special courses on topics, such as child protection, women in peacekeeping operations and the protection of civilians.

In addition to existing measures, we have, in accordance with the recently introduced operational guidelines on the implementation of the Security Council resolution 2272 (2016) and selected related measures contained in additional General Assembly documents, immediately taken additional steps to reach our common goal and therefore started issuing required certificates of compliance for our troops to be deployed and have appointed an investigation officer among our already deployed troops in case an investigation would be needed. Slovenia was also among the first countries to endorse the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians, which provide a valuable framework to ensure that peacekeepers are better prepared to protect civilians.

Slovenia has consistently advocated that raising awareness on human rights is of the utmost importance. More should be done, and more should be invested in human rights education and the training of those assigned to protect the civilian population at home and abroad.

Acts of sexual exploitation and abuse are not only physical acts but also represent a grave violation of the trust of vulnerable persons by those in a position of authority. The consequences are immense at both the individual and the community levels.

We therefore call on all parties to do more at the national, regional and global levels, individually as well as collectively, to prevent such acts from ever happening again. Implementing a zero-tolerance policy must be our priority.

Ms. Coleman (United States of America): Our thanks go to the President of the General Assembly for having convened this meeting. The United States welcomes this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to addressing the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse and our collective support for the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy and his efforts to strengthen its implementation.

Sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel inflict significant harm on vulnerable communities, the very communities that look to the United Nations for protection and assistance in some of the world's most dangerous places. It also undermines the legitimacy and effectiveness of the United Nations.

Several positive efforts have been recently undertaken in this respect. In 2015, the annual report of the Secretary-General on sexual exploitation and abuse (A/69/779) detailed more than 60 initiatives to address prevention, enforcement and remedial action. Almost a year ago, the Secretary-General met with troop- and police-contributing countries to further discuss these measures. Following the release of the report of the External Independent Review Panel on the Central African Republic, the Secretary-General appointed Jane Holl Lute as the Special Coordinator on improving United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse. Her efforts to date in harmonizing the United Nations system's approach to sexual exploitation and abuse have been critical.

This year the Secretary-General also undertook important steps towards increasing transparency and accountability on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse and establish the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. Member States also took action in the realm of sexual exploitation and abuse. In March, the Security Council adopted resolution 2272 (2016), endorsing the authority of the Secretary-General to hold countries accountable for failing to take appropriate action following allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse against their personnel. And in May, the Fifth Committee adopted a cross-cutting peacekeeping resolution that welcomed the determination of the Secretary-General fully to implement a zero-tolerance policy, reaffirm the need for enhanced coordination for victim support and expand the United Nations policy of transparency for allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse.

These all are important steps in the right direction towards accountability, transparency, prevention and victim assistance. Together, these reforms are crucial for upholding zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse, and now that they have been fully integrated into United Nations policies and standard operating procedures, we must move forward; we cannot go back.

Sexual exploitation and abuse is not a problem that can be solved by a single decision or action. Member States and the United Nations together must be constantly vigilant and seek ways to improve the implementation of the letter and the spirit of the zero-tolerance policy. In this regard, we welcome the recent step taken by the United Nations of publishing examples of how troop- and police-contributing countries, Member States more broadly and other international organizations handle allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by sharing national laws, organizational rules and policies and examples of actions taken in response to specific sexual exploitation and abuse allegations. We can identify and build on best practices.

The United States firmly supports the authority of the Secretary-General to implement his zero-tolerance policy and welcomes the initiatives that he has undertaken thus far.

Member States and the United Nations share a joint responsibility to prevent and address sexual exploitation and abuse and to ensure that victims receive the assistance that they need. Today we reaffirm our unanimous position that one substantiated case of sexual exploitation and abuse is one too many and that we all have a collective obligation to address this scourge.

Finally, we must also recommit to protecting whistleblowers, since we know that there remains a significant issue of underreporting of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Mr. Kabentayev (Kazakhstan): Kazakhstan commends the President of the General Assembly for having convened this formal meeting and resolutely joins the United Nations system, other Member States and numerous partners in their efforts to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and abuse.

Despite the progress made, incidents of abuse continue. Therefore, my delegation would like to propose strengthening the following measures, including

protocols, standards, procedures, accountability and remedial measures.

First, sexual exploitation and abuse and other forms of misconduct should be regularly placed on the agenda of the Security Council with troop-contributing countries (TCCs), with rigorous follow-up on all reported cases.

Secondly, TCCs must commit to the six-month timeline for completing investigations and report back to the United Nations on the measures taken in connection with criminal conduct.

Thirdly, we must mobilize an immediate emergency response team of police and medical officers, with a roster of specialists who can travel speedily and also can later provide evidence for investigations by TCCs so as to facilitate prosecution, giving no impunity to offenders. This should be facilitated through information and technology for tracking, abuse mitigation and the vetting of peacekeepers.

Fourthly, we need to strengthen the United Nations comprehensive strategy on assistance and support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by providing adequate funding and personnel. The victims of human trafficking and sexual violence should receive full, competent and speedy attention with increased access to health care, psychosocial support, legal assistance and socioeconomic reintegration. It means working with the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and for Children in Armed Conflict, UN-Women, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the network of sexual abuse and exploitation focal points.

Fifthly, the greater participation of well-trained women peacekeepers would also help to improve the overall quality of peacekeeping and protection of women.

We fully support the United Nations zero-tolerance policy for all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse. A gender focus must be intrinsic to promoting human rights, the rule of law, transitional justice and security-sector reform in multidimensional operations. Women should be fully engaged in the processes of conflict prevention and resolution and societal reconstruction, even at the highest levels of peace agreements.

Kazakhstan is currently contributing to the process by fielding highly qualified military observers with gender competence to the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, and we hope to expand this deployment in future.

As the former Chair and an actively engaged member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Kazakhstan is making a significant contribution to creating conditions conducive to the protection of women by actively working towards the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and other international instruments in the relevant national institutions and legislation, and encouraging women's participation in the political and economic spheres.

Kazakhstan shares with other Member States a deep conviction of the need to uphold the dignity of and respect for women in times of conflict.

Mr. Castro Cordoba (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica thanks Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the General Assembly, for convening this formal meeting on sexual exploitation and abuse. Costa Rica maintains its firm support for the Secretary-General in his determination to eradicate cases of sexual exploitation and abuse and his implementation of zero-tolerance policies, and we hold that any confirmed case of sexual exploitation and abuse is unacceptable.

We reiterate our appreciation for all efforts to improve mechanisms for preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and for reducing the time needed to carry out investigations, and to promote public communication and information, educational programmes for employees, and improvements in timeliness and substantive parts of the investigations carried out by national authorities with a view to punishing the perpetrators, when applicable, among other things. We welcome the appointment of Ms. Jane Holl Lute as Special Coordinator on improving United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse, and especially appreciate her openness, communication and accountability towards the membership.

We continue to urge the relevant authorities, countries that contribute troops, police and civilian personnel, and in general all stakeholders to make greater efforts to eradicate cases of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations personnel, to prevent their recurrence and to not allow their perpetrators to act with impunity. We commend the

work carried out by the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and welcome its comprehensive report on the situation of peacekeeping operations (see A/70/95). Nevertheless, we regret the delay in its submission to the Member States and the fact that the Secretariat did not accept the entirety of the recommendations contained therein.

Costa Rica, along with other interested and concerned countries as relates to this topic, has followed it closely. We have demanded accountability from Organization authorities, but we have also extended our support so that we could take the necessary measures in the General Assembly to do away with this scourge. We cannot in one breath condemn these acts, and in another, not provide the Organization with the necessary resources and political support to counter them.

The persistence of serious allegations of such acts by peacekeeping personnel; the fact that many cases are still unreported; the lack of assistance to the victims; and the unaccountability, in many cases, of contingent-contributing countries in not investigating charges of sexual exploitation and abuse levelled at their personnel, along with the concomitant obligation to be accountable for such personnel, undermine the implementation of the mandates of peacekeeping operations and the credibility of such operations and of the Organization itself. These abominable acts are in clear violation of the fundamental duty to protect the local population, which they should help, and to which the entire peacekeeping operation personnel is obligated. Moreover, the actions of a few sully the heroic work of the tens of thousands of staff members working towards the principles for which the Organization was created.

We must improve the time needed to carry out investigations. Missions must have more personnel and resources for that purpose, and there must be better tools to obtain the necessary evidence to substantiate cases. Moreover, the Organization and its Member States must duly apply and enforce resolution 70/114, on the criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission.

We also call on the Secretary-General to implement Security Council resolution 2272 (2016) in its entirety, particularly as it relates to the repatriation of military or police units when there is credible evidence that said unit has committed those types of acts. Any country that does not take the corresponding measures to investigate the allegations against its personnel and is unaccountable in that regard should be replaced and the available evidence in the investigation preserved.

In most cases, the United Nations is the last glimmer of hope for communities and victims. The Organization cannot allow itself to fail at this critical juncture. Additionally, sexual exploitation and abuse cases damage the credibility of peacekeeping operations, a fundamental pillar in the founding of the Organization; they thwart the implementation of its mandates, especially as relates to the protection of civilians; and they tarnish the image of the impartiality of the Organization in the eyes of the local population. All of our efforts to eradicate these cases and avoid impunity should be deterrent in nature so that current and new staff simply do not commit that sort of errors and crimes, and so that the perpetrators of same are punished, rather than, as regrettably occurred in this case, punishing the staff who seek to ensure that the Organization carries out its mandate.

Mr. Zehnder (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank President Lykketoft for convening this debate on such a crucial topic. We are dismayed by the elevated and growing number of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse committed during field missions and by the persistence of the most egregious forms of such acts. The fact that these reprehensible acts and crimes are often insufficiently condemned, and as a result, apparently become even more prevalent only adds to our concern.

In the past month, much attention has been paid to sexual exploitation and abuse committed in the context of peacekeeping operations. It is a problem that affects the entire United Nations system, not only uniformed personnel. Consequently, it is essential to ensure that systemic preventive measures are taken.

We applaud the work of the Special Coordinator. All personnel in every department must be accountable for reprehensible sexual exploitation and abuse. Given the gravity of the problem, the measures taken under the guidance of the Special Coordinator must be long-term and matched by complementary provisions. That is why Switzerland supports extending the Special Coordinator's mandate.

We welcome the recommendations of the Independent Review Panel on the United Nations Response to Allegations of Sexual Abuse by Foreign Military Forces in the Central African Republic. These must be implemented swiftly and relentlessly. In that

connection, my delegation applauds Security Council resolution 2272 (2016).

Despite the measures adopted, it is apparent that much remains to be done to ensure the implementation of the zero-tolerance policy. Every act of sexual exploitation and abuse is one too many and has a devastating effect on its victims for the rest of their lives. The United Nations must ensure that the victims of these types of crimes are provided support. The implementation of the zero-tolerance policy is not only for the United Nations system; it applies equally to all Member States. Only the full cooperation and commitment of Member States can guarantee true accountability. We must all take timely action to investigate allegations as soon as they arise and bring to justice those responsible for these criminal acts. We must inform the Secretary-General of how we have handled allegations of which we have become aware. However, the national legal and policy framework of Member States is often inadequate to address allegations of crimes allegedly committed by foreign nationals abroad or within their own territory. That issue deserves further consideration and must be addressed in all relevant committees. Allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse must be investigated so that the perpetrators of such crimes can be held to account. The United Nations operates within different contexts throughout the world. As a Member State, Switzerland's responsibility is to ensure that the Office of Internal Oversight Services has the necessary means at its disposal so that investigators can be dispatched as quickly as possible.

Finally, we wish to underscore the capital importance of transparency in ensuring the credibility of the United Nations and its efforts to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and ensure that the perpetrators of such acts are held accountable for them. We must not forget that every day millions of people benefit from the work of the Organization. A passive attitude towards sexual exploitation and abuse undermines the credibility of the United Nations in general, and tarnishes the indispensable and remarkable work it does in that area.

Mr. Grant (Canada) (*spoke in French*): I thank the President for having convened this important meeting on the topic of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Canada remains deeply concerned by all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations personnel, peacekeepers and non-United Nations forces. We welcome the recent initiatives of the Secretary-General and Member States to combat sexual exploitation and abuse. However, we must guard against complacency. A greater sensitivity to sexual abuse and exploitation is not a substitute for the action and momentum needed to solve the problem.

(*spoke in English*)

The United Nations and Member States must first improve transparency on sexual exploitation and abuse, including by providing timely updates on the status of investigations. The lack of information and accountability for the horrific abuses committed in the Central African Republic corrodes the legitimacy of the United Nations. Canada believes that sexual exploitation and abuse can be addressed only through transparency and accountability. That is why we have supported the Secretary-General in his initiative to publicly list troop- and police-contributing countries facing allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. As last year's list has shown, Canada is not immune to sexual exploitation and abuse. We acknowledge that there have been cases involving Canadian peacekeepers. In acknowledging those cases, we commit to be transparent and work constructively to ensure that our peacekeepers are held to the highest standards of conduct.

Secondly, Member States must back their pledges for zero tolerance with concrete and effective action domestically and here at the United Nations, including in bodies such as the Fifth Committee and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, among others.

Thirdly, the United Nations and its Member States must be more innovative in their approach to assisting victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. For example, the United Nations could consider developing a survivor's charter of rights that would clearly identify United Nations policies, points of contact, updates on investigations and available psycho-social support. Addressing sexual exploitation and abuse is the joint responsibility of the United Nations and Member States, and there are many actions that Member States can take unilaterally to fight sexual exploitation and abuse. Those include better screening, training, legislation, transparency and reporting for all categories of personnel. Member States and the United Nations should also share best practices.

Fourthly, the United Nations and Member States must do more to institutionalize their response to sexual exploitation and abuse. Clearly, sexual exploitation and

abuse are not an issue that will be addressed through small technical fixes or temporary appointments. It requires sustained efforts over the long term by the United Nations and Member States and should be structured and supported accordingly. As a start, the United Nations should consolidate the position of the Special Coordinator on internationalmproving United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse over the long term so as to maintain pressure and momentum in addressing sexual exploitation and abuse.

(*spoke in French*)

In conclusion, Canada believes that much remains to be done to rid the United Nations of the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse. We will continue to engage with the United Nations and Member States to find the means needed to strengthen our collective response.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank the President for convening this debate and Egypt for initiating it.

Peacekeepers at their best present the Organization at its best. They shield the oppressed. They provide hope to the hopeless. They help build a more peaceful future, often in the face of great personal danger. For all that, we are all deeply grateful. But peacekeepers who commit sexual exploitation and abuse undermine everything. They harm the very people whom they are meant to protect. They destroy people's lives and futures. In the eyes of the victims and of the world, they destroy the reputation and credibility of the whole Organization. And that is why we must view each and every case of sexual exploitation and abuse as one too many. Twelve new cases have been listed since July, and that is simply unacceptable.

Today's debate is a chance for all Member States, especially all troop- and police-contributing countries, and for the United Nations in general to commit to making that number zero. The Secretary-General has shown his commitment to doing so. I am delighted that his Special Coordinator on improving United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse, Ms. Jane Holl Lute, will take part tomorrow in the discussion on fighting this issue at the United Nations Defence Ministerial Meeting in London. I hope that all troop-contributing countries will work with Ms. Lute and incorporate best practices from around the world into their own military doctrine to stop this scourge.

There are perhaps the beginnings of some modest signs of progress, both from troop-contributing countries and the United Nations. The United Kingdom welcomes the steps taken since February detailed in the Secretary-General's report of 23 June (A/71/97). It is positive that some Member States have carried out investigations into allegations of abuse and are improving their cooperation with the United Nations. Mr. Lute's coordinated efforts to address fragmentation within the United Nations system are also beginning to bear fruit. Many of the recommendations made in the independent report commissioned by the Secretary-General have now been partially or fully implemented. But there is much more that needs to be done.

Each and every one of those 12 new cases painfully illustrates that point. Genuine Member State commitment is needed, particularly when implementing the remaining recommendations of the independent report. We need to up our game, particularly on prevention, transparency of investigations and criminal accountability for offenders. To do so, there are some simple steps that we can take, and we will be discussing those at the London Ministerial tomorrow.

First, all peacekeepers must be fully vetted, trained and equipped before deployment. Secondly, peacekeepers need to know that they will be held accountable if they commit acts of sexual exploitation and abuse. Thirdly, troop-contributing States must have the mechanisms and the will to investigate allegations swiftly and thoroughly, and punish offenders. Finally, victims need to be kept informed of the status and outcome of investigations so that they can see that justice has been done. As my Canadian colleague just said, accountability and transparency go hand in hand.

I am proud to say today that the United Kingdom is committed to all four of those steps. United Kingdom troops receive rigorous predeployment training on sexual exploitation and abuse. They know that they will be held to account for any abuses. I believe that the United Nations and the entire international community are willing to make the same commitment. So let us work together to erradicate the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse for the credibility of peacekeeping missions and, most importantly, for the people they are there to protect.

Ms. Bird (Australia): Put simply, sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers must stop. It exploits the vulnerability of the very people they have been sent

to protect and is a fundamental betrayal of trust. It undermines the credibility of peacekeeping operations and the legitimacy of the United Nations.

The Secretary-General has shown determination to pursue the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. His report on combating sexual exploitation and abuse (A/70/729) demonstrates solid progress in implementing many of the external independent panel's recommendations in ensuring coherence and harmonization through the Special Coordinator on improving United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse and in operationalizing Security Council resolution 2272 (2016).

We welcome the range of initiatives aimed at prevention, victim assistance and accountability. In particular, we support commanders and managers being held responsible for creating an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse; the establishment of a dedicated trust fund for medical, psychosocial and legal services for survivors; and the Secretariat's ongoing follow-up and reporting on the status of sexual exploitation and abuse cases.

There is still work to be done to achieve criminal accountability. Member States have the primary responsibility for investigating and prosecuting crimes committed by their nationals. We support, in principle, the proposal for an international convention that ensures the criminal accountability of United Nations personnel in connection with crimes committed in peacekeeping operations. It would require Member States to exercise their criminal jurisdiction over their nationals participating in United Nations operations. If our commitment to the rule of law is to oe more than rhetoric, Member States must lead by example.

For Australia's part, our military and police personnel deployed to United Nations peacekeeping missions receive predeployment training consistent with Department of Peacekeeping Operations requirements for sexual exploitation and abuse and other protection issues, as well as on ethics, conduct and behaviour. For the past five years, we have included a sexual exploitation and abuse component in our bilateral exercises with Thailand and Indonesia, as well as in all major mobile training teams. We have passed legislation that establishes Australian jurisdiction over serious crimes committed by our nationals overseas, including United Nations peacekeepers and United Nations civilians, which we have shared with the Special Coordinator. We also maintain a stand-by investigative capability able to deploy immediately to commence investigations into alleged criminal or disciplinary offences by military and police personnel in all operations in which we participate.

The United Nations has always stood as a beacon of hope for the world's most vulnerable people. Sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers extinguishes that hope for survivors and their communities. It undermines our efforts to restore peace and security and disrespects the vast majority of peacekeepers who serve honourably. We must have zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse. We must provide survivors with assistance, protection and justice. They deserve nothing less.

Mr. Gafoor (Singapore): I thank Egypt and the other delegations that requested a debate on this important issue.

Let me start with the most obvious, but also the most important point. The increasing number of sexual exploitation and abuse cases has deeply affected the victims, many of whom are women and children. The human cost is high and the suffering of victims is permanent. Equally important, these cases have damaged the credibility of the United Nations and its peace operations.

Unfortunately, sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations are not new. Since this ugly issue reappeared recently, there have been some significant and positive steps taken by the United Nations. Singapore welcomes the measures taken to strengthen the United Nations zero-tolerance policy, enhance transparency and implement a victim-centred approach. However, much remains to be done. We have to act swiftly, but also act in a coordinated and comprehensive manner. In this regard, I wish to make five points.

First, we welcome the steps taken to enforce the United Nations zero-tolerance policy. These include immediate response teams in peace operations, as well as community-based complaint mechanisms. Earlier this year, Security Council resolution 2272 (2016) endorsed the decision of the Secretary-General to repatriate contingents where there has been credible evidence of widespread or systematic abuse. We commend it, as well the efforts of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Ms. Heidi Mendoza. We hope the

next Secretary-General will continue to attach the greatest priority to this issue.

My second point is that we in Singapore support efforts made by many troop- and police-contributing countries who have stepped up their coordination with the United Nations. National investigation officers are now being deployed more swiftly when allegations arise. Many of the contributing countries have expedited their investigations. We commend them, as well the Secretariat's initiative to compile and highlight best practices. This will help us to learn from one another. Close and continued cooperation between the United Nations and contributing countries is crucial to solving this problem.

My third point is that we must build a culture of responsibility and accountability within every United Nations peace operation. The United Nations cannot champion the rule of law if its representatives break the law, or worse, if they allow abuses to go unaddressed. Building a culture of accountability begins with individuals. In this regard, we are pleased that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support have worked with troop-contributing countries to strengthen and expand predeployment training. The Department of Field Support has begun to use its Misconduct Tracking System to vet troops. Singapore also welcomes the strengthened reporting framework for allegations and investigations and the move towards greater public transparency. In our view, more sunlight in dark corners is good because it will ensure that there is no tolerance and no hiding of such heinous crimes. We urge the next Secretary-General, when he or she is appointed, to continue building a culture of responsibility and accountability.

My fourth point is that there must be a system-wide approach to addressing sexual exploitation and abuse. I was distressed recently when I read of one independent report that said that allegations were passed from "desk to desk and inbox to inbox". Victims are not files or e-mails. They are human beings. The United Nations needs to make sure that every allegation is investigated and no one falls through the cracks.

In that regard, Singapore welcomes the appointment of Ms. Jane Holl Lute as Special Coordinator on improving United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse. Her work has been important in analysing the problem and homing in on key issues. The system-wide working group that she chairs will bring coherence and coordination to the United Nations response. The high-level steering group on sexual abuse and gender-based violence will also keep senior management's attention squarely focused on the problem. We are confident that Ms. Lute will help to plug the gaps and ensure that the United Nations pursues justice from start to finish.

My fifth and final point is that the fight to eradicate sexual exploitation and abuse must be a continuing one. All Member States and the Secretariat must work together to continually monitor and improve the Organization's frameworks. We must also ask whether existing policies are adequate, whether peace operations have controls in place and whether there are enough investigators, both at Headquarters and in the field. We should remember that the improvements we have made are not for their own sake. They are there in order to make a difference to the most vulnerable and to uphold the name, reputation, credibility and integrity of the United Nations.

Mr. Tuy (Cambodia): I would first like to express our appreciation to the President for convening today's important meeting on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse under agenda item 122, "Strengthening of the United Nations system".

Sexual exploitation and abuse is an ongoing threat that undermines the heroic work of tens of thousands of United Nations peacekeepers and personnel. It affects the implementation of peacekeeping mandates as well as the credibility of United Nations peacekeeping. According to the February report of the Secretary-General (A/70/729), the total number of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping missions in 2015 was 69, while the number for 2016 has already reached 44. Such figures show that we must all ensure that the actions of a few do not tarnish the achievements of others in peacekeeping operations.

The Royal Government of Cambodia shares the concern about the serious and continuing allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse both by United Nations peacekeepers and non-United Nations forces. We would like to emphasize that such acts, whoever commits them, are unacceptable under any circumstances, and that it is absolutely critical to ensure that accountability is appropriate and swift and that addressing the victims' immediate needs is a priority. Cambodia, along with 13 other troop-contributing countries, has been

commended by the Under-Secretary-General for Field Support for its ethical peacekeeping performance. The Government of Cambodia fully supports the Secretary-General's continued efforts to implement and reinforce the zero-tolerance policy of the United Nations on sexual exploitation and abuse, and specifically those aimed at strengthening mechanisms for prevention, reporting, enforcement and remedial action so as to promote greater accountability.

Cambodia's National Centre for Peacekeeping has been actively conducting training sessions for its personnel on United Nations peacekeeping conduct and discipline and on respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, culture and laws of host countries before deployments to mission areas. In that regard, Cambodia calls on Member States to join with the United Nations in taking concrete steps to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and abuse and to ensure that those who commit such crimes are held legally accountable.

My delegation would also like to express its profound solidarity with all victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, and to urge the United Nations and Member States to make such victims' well-being a priority by taking all necessary measures to provide them with adequate support and assistance.

Mr. Sauer (Finland): Finland aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union.

I would like to join previous speakers in thanking the President for organizing today's formal debate, as well as the group of important troop-contributing countries for their initiative.

Sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations field operations has been in the headlines too often in the last few years. It is simply unacceptable when United Nations personnel, whether civilian or military, abuse the people they are sent to protect. Cases of sexual exploitation and abuse undermine the effectiveness of the United Nations in the field and pose a serious threat to its reputation and credibility.

Where sexual exploitation and abuse are concerned, we should pay equal attention to prevention, to ensuring accountability through timely investigations and appropriate judicial proceedings and to supporting the victims. And we must take the political, legal, administrative and financial aspects of all those areas into account. The multifaceted nature of sexual exploitation and abuse makes it a challenging subject in the context of the United Nations. A number of different committees, as well as the Security Council, deal with different aspects of it. There are multiple actors and responsibilities involved, with many reporting lines and different forms of accountability. Today's debate is a useful opportunity to take comprehensive stock of the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse.

We welcome the increased attention that the Secretary-General and senior management have given to the persistent problem of sexual exploitation and abuse over the past year, as well as the active involvement in the issue of the membership of the United Nations, both in the General Assembly and the Security Council. Important steps have been taken, such as the adoption of Security Council resolution 2272 (2016) and the Fifth Committee's cross-cutting resolution, adopted by the General Assembly as resolution 70/286. I would like to highlight four key areas where progress has been made in the past year but a lot of work is still needed.

First is a strengthened commitment to our zero-tolerance policy, since further effort is needed to ensure that zero tolerance becomes a zero-case reality. That is a joint responsibility of the Secretariat and troop-contributing Member States. Second is a shared responsibility for reacting promptly to all allegations directed at United Nations-mandated operations and United Nations entities, whether they concern civilians, uniformed personnel, the staff of United Nations funds and programmes or subcontractors. The third is the importance of system-wide cooperation. Ms. Jane Holl Lute, Special Coordinator on improving United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse, has played an important role in that regard, and we thank her for her work. Lastly, there is the area of support to victims, where the trust fund is one important step but for which a more comprehensive approach is also required. It is also vital that we address the systemic issues, fragmentation and other weaknesses — including discrepancies in attitudes — in the United Nations system, in order to strengthen its response not only to sexual exploitation and abuse but also to other forms of accountability deficits.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the Assembly of my delegation's firm commitment to doing its utmost to prevent and combat further cases of sexual exploitation and abuse both nationally and at the level of the United Nations. Even one case of sexual exploitation and abuse is too many.

Mr. Minami (Japan): I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to President Lykketoft for having convened this important meeting.

It is regrettable that we continue to hear allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. We must cooperate in addressing these heinous acts, which have significantly damaged the credibility of the United Nations.

Security Council resolution 2272 (2016) reaffirms the zero-tolerance policy adopted by the Secretary-General and sets out concrete measures to be taken in order to combat sexual exploitation and abuse. I would like to reiterate Japan's full support for the resolution and its implementation.

In the implementation of the resolution, it is essential to coordinate the efforts of all Member States, including troop-contributing countries (TCCs) and police-contributing countries (PCCs). Without the understanding and cooperation of TCCs and PCCs, any measures we take will fall short. In this regard, I commend the efforts made by the President of General Assembly, who convened several briefings on sexual exploitation and abuse this year that deepened understanding among Member States.

One area Japan has supported is the United Nations e-learning programme on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. Training materials have been recently established for this purpose. I would like to emphasize that this programme can be effective only when trainees, including personnel provided by TCCs/PCCs, understand its objective and are proactively involved. As laid out in resolution 2272 (2016), robust predeployment training is essential, and it is vitally important for us to expand understanding among TCCs and PCCs. For this reason, Japan and the United Nations Department of Field Support will jointly hold an event to introduce the training materials next week, on 13 September. This will be the first opportunity to showcase the material before Member States. Japan strongly backs this effort as part of the effective implementation of the resolution, and I look forward to seeing as many colleagues as possible there.

Japan places central importance on the provision of assistance to victims, an area covered by resolution 2272 (2016). All Member States should consider what they can do to help victims. Just one year ago, Prime Minister Abe of Japan expressed Japan's commitment to providing support for a remedial action programme for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse at the second Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping, held here in New York. Japan is announcing its concrete contribution at the United Nations Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial in London and encourages other Member States to join us.

Japan has also taken additional measures to support the implementation of the resolution. For instance, we designated a national investigation officer in our troops deployed to South Sudan in response to a request by the Secretariat.

Peacekeepers are the last hope for people suffering on the ground. It is unacceptable for peacekeepers to betray people's trust through sexual exploitation and abuse. It is equally unacceptable for such acts by certain peacekeepers to tarnish the honour of the vast majority of peacekeepers, who are serving earnestly and under difficult circumstances.

I strongly believe that we must all work together in tackling sexual exploitation and abuse through concrete measures such as those I have described today, for the sake of both the victims and the United Nations.

Mr. Nayan (Philippines): The Philippines wishes to commend President Lykketoft for having organized today's debate on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations under agenda item 122, "Strengthening of the United Nations system".

I wish to recall the remarks of the Secretary-General made at a ceremony in observance of the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers in May, during which he said that peacekeeping remains the flagship agenda of the United Nations enterprise.

It is therefore imperative that issues that undermine this flagship agenda, such as sexual exploitation and abuse, be given continued attention. We laud the efforts of the Secretary-General, through Ms. Jane Holl Lute, Special Coordinator on improving United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse, and her team for pursuing vigorously the task of curbing this scourge and rebuilding the trust of the communities affected.

Early this year, from the General Assembly high-level thematic debate on peace and security, to the high-level seminar on United Nations peace operations and at least two General Assembly informal briefing sessions, the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse was discussed extensively. This issue not only undermines the values and principles of the United Nations, but also erodes the trust of the peoples we have vowed to

protect. It is inexcusable. It is unacceptable. It has no place in the United Nations system.

Viewed in the context of the protection-of-civilians mandate of United Nations peacekeeping operations, this critical issue must be addressed aggressively through the following: first, robust predeployment and in-mission training programmes that underscore leadership responsibility and accountability throughout the chain of command; secondly, appropriate information exchange on context-specific responses to sexual exploitation and abuse cases; and, thirdly, innovative capacity-building initiatives based on best practices in overcoming a culture of impunity.

Proud of its peacekeeping tradition for more than 50 years in 15 countries and territories, the Philippines reiterates its strong and unequivocal support for the United Nations zero-tolerance policy to combat sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations and missions. One case of sexual exploitation and abuse is one too many, tarnishes the Organization's image and does a great disservice to our brave and honourable peacekeepers who have made the ultimate sacrifice for the cause of peace. The Philippines is strongly committed to ending sexual violence whenever and wherever it occurs, and we will hold our troops accountable to the highest standards of conduct.

The Philippines, now more than ever, stands in solidarity with other States Members of the United Nations to work together to protect the good name of United Nations peacekeeping and uphold the trust of the people.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union and would like to add the following remarks in its national capacity.

Italy is the main troop and police contributor to peacekeeping operations in the Group of Western European and Other States. We are also among the original subscribers to the Kigali Declaration on the Protection of Civilians. In essence, we attach the utmost importance to peacekeeping operations and their stabilizing effects. I reiterate Italy's full support for the zero-tolerance policy against sexual exploitation and abuse, in particular the various proposals on prevention, enforcement and remedial action for that scourge. We very much welcome the adoption of Security Council resolution 2272 (2016), General Assembly resolution 70/286 and the strengthening of the Conduct and Discipline Unit within the Department of Field Support.

We strongly believe in the importance of predeployment training to carry out peacekeeping mandates. In that regard, Italy's Carabinieri Corps has developed unique training capacities in that specific field through programmes offered by the Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units (CoESPU), based in Vicenza, Italy, which has, to date, trained almost 9,000 units from 98 different countries. Every CoESPU course provides specific modules on operators' code of conduct, gender mainstreaming and combating sexual exploitation and abuse, and additionally offers other training activities, such as the protection of civilians, in order to instil an understanding among military personnel of the operational concept of civilian protection. There are training activities for United Nations formed police units to be deployed to a theatre of operations, for international military police to serve in deployed units and other classes on the basics of combating violence towards vulnerable people in crisis areas.

Due to the growing need that has been underlined, inter alia, by Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent documents, up to and including Council resolution 2272 (2016), to provide the best tools to personnel deployed in peacekeeping missions in order to enable them to appropriately address issues regarding vulnerable populations, CoESPU launched a course in 2014 on gender protection in peace-support operations. The purposes of the programme are to teach peace-support staff about the difficulties faced by vulnerable people and how to combat discrimination against them; best practices in the field; and skills for investigating cases of sexual violence and the human slave trade.

To that end, the Vicenza Centre has hired a gender and child protection adviser, who trains peace operators about gender-related issues before their deployment. The course on gender protection, started in 2014, has been offered four times. The fifth iteration will begin in early 2017. Aside from these specific courses, all of the programme offerings at the Vicenza centre provide training modules on gender protection.

To conclude, sexual exploitation and abuse has the potential to undermine the legitimacy and credibility of this very Organization if we do not act now with resolve to implement the zero-tolerance policy and allow zero

impunity for all personnel in the United Nations and other international peace operations that have been committing such heinous acts. Now more than ever, we need to redouble national and United Nations efforts to stop and properly punish such acts.

Ms. Pedros Carretero (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. I will limit my remarks to a few considerations on behalf of Spain.

I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for having convened this plenary meeting on a sensitive topic that requires the firm commitment of the entire membership. The international community must respond to events that tarnish the credibility and legitimacy of the United Nations and that undermine the commendable work of its peace missions. We would also like to publicly thank the Secretary-General and the Special Coordinator on improving United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse for the consultations of recent months aimed at identifying best practices in the field.

We would highlight that Spain, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, actively supported Security Council resolution 2272 (2016), which seeks to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and abuse by personnel deployed on peace missions. It is the first Council resolution that is wholly and exclusively dedicated to that topic. Through its adoption, the international community sends a clear message to perpetrators of such acts.

As previous speakers have mentioned, we must act jointly if we are to successfully address the problem. Troop- and police-contributing countries are primarily responsible for their deployed uniformed personnel in the Secretariat and in the host country. All contributing countries must implement the appropriate measures to ensure that the necessary investigations are being carried out and that the perpetrators are brought to justice and sanctioned accordingly as quickly as possible.

I would like to stress that cases of sexual exploitation and abuse can occur in any contingent. We must not single out countries that promptly and diligently conduct investigation and promote accountability for those responsible for individual acts. Quite the contrary, we must praise troop- and police-contributing countries with robust preventive measures that investigate and prosecute their nationals when there is reasonable cause to do so. In our view, there are several key elements in the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse.

First, we must all bolster prevention through robust predeployment training with the backing of the United Nations. We especially support the human rights screening policy that prevents deploying personnel who have a record of sexual exploitation and abuse. As we have pointed out on several occasions, Spain promotes gender mainstreaming and incorporating perspectives of women, peace and security in the operational work of peace missions as key preventive measures. We particularly support the development of a new strategy to reward greater participation of women among United Nations military personnel with a view to doubling the current rate over the next few years, in line with Council resolution 2242 (2015). The greater participation of women in peace missions is, in and of itself, a preventive measure that will garner the trust of victims in denouncing possible abuse at the hands of mission personnel. We are concerned that many cases go unreported.

In addition, we must adopt urgent measures to set a maximum — I repeat, maximum — period of six months to investigate allegations and enforce the appropriate punishments and disciplinary measures if the facts are borne out. We must develop the proper protocol to support victims by guaranteeing confidentiality, minimizing trauma stemming from the numerous interviews to be conducted by United Nations staff and ensuring access to medical and psychosocial assistance. We promote transparency following formal allegations through monitoring the subsequent process, including any action taken as a result of the findings.

My delegation wishes to take this opportunity to reiterate our firm support for the Secretary-General's ongoing efforts to implement his zero-tolerance policy, and we welcome the various measures proposed in his recent reports. In that connection, we take note of the operational guide distributed in June regarding the implementation of Council resolution 2272 (2016).

I would be remiss if I did not briefly mention the measures being implemented in Spain that seek to reduce the prevalence of sexual exploitation and abuse. Our Ministry of Defence is offering an international course entitled "Comprehensive approach to gender mainstreaming in operations". To date, 16 international courses have been held in Europe and Africa. Similarly, gender awareness in operations has been part and

parcel of Spain's armed forces since 2011. Each troop deployment has a designated gender adviser officer who is also the focal point for issues related to sexual exploitation and abuse. Moreover, the President of Spain, at the high-level Security Council debate in October 2015 (S/PV.7533), which resulted in the adoption of resolution 2242 (2015), made the following pledges regarding sexual exploitation: to ensure that all recruiting and training courses for the armed forces include special training on Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse; to encourage that all first- and second-tier commanders who participate in international missions and operations receive specific training in that area; and lastly, to launch a virtual course on gender in the context of operations before October 2016.

Finally, our armed forces are working on implementing other solutions of a more general character. Among others, we are trying to reduce the time spent by troops on the ground, encourage the promotion of force commanders with recognized experience in that area, reinforce self-policing among the troops and improve communication between the civilian community and potential victims. Our message is short and clear — there are civilians who are victims of sexual exploitation and abuse at the hands of others, and they must be assured protection. These victims have names. The least that they deserve is the swift reaction of the international community and our attentive follow-up.

Ms. Pereira Sotomayor (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Ecuador welcomes the convening of this debate as a platform for addressing, in a transparent and determined manner, the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated by peacekeeping operations personnel dispatched and authorized by the United Nations. At the same time, Ecuador recognizes the importance of United Nations peacekeeping operations and the commendable work carried out by the troop and police contingents deployed in those operations, as well as by the civilian personnel of the Organization.

We must consider that, for many people living in countries affected by conflict, the only contact they might have with the United Nations would be precisely with a soldier from a peace mission, which is to say that soldiers serving under the flag of the United Nations have an additional responsibility. The reprehensible events that occurred in the Central African Republic in 2015, unleashing a major uproar because they involved a vulnerable part of the population, evidenced the Organization's lack of action and failure to implement appropriate measures to prevent and end the commission of acts of sexual abuse, which, on the contrary, became a recurring practice. The reaction of the international community and the impact on the credibility of United Nations peace operations were a warning for the United Nations to handle this sensitive issue with greater commitment so as to ensure the prevention and prosecution of such acts.

Since that time, there have been several positive developments. The publication in December 2015 of the report entitled "Taking action on sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers", prepared by an independent Panel of Experts appointed by the Secretary-General, established one of the regulatory frameworks for addressing cases of sexual exploitation and abuse. This framework is derived from the United Nations mandate for the protection of human rights, which is rooted in the Preamble of the Charter of the United Nations, wherein lies the urgency for the United Nations to accord the same importance to the cause of human rights as it does to issues of security and development, particularly on behalf of vulnerable populations in which women and children are mostly affected. At the same time, that requires greater coherence and coordination among the various competent intergovernmental agencies of the United Nations system, for it is a matter of ensuring civilians among whom the Blue Helmets are deployed that their human rights, which have already been impacted by the tragedy of conflict, will be respected and protected.

Ecuador shoulders its responsibility as a troop-contributing country to peacekeeping operations. We hope that, after this debate, the various reflections that it has engendered will promote acceptance of the recommendations of the Secretary-General contained in his latest report (A/71/97) in order to further the implementation of the zero-tolerance policy and the Security Council's call to fight impunity and prosecute those guilty of sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank President Lykketoft and the countries that asked for the convening of this debate, which gives us the opportunity to discuss a challenge whose solution is essential to the future of peacekeeping missions and the image of the United Nations in general.

Argentina expresses its ongoing and tireless support for the zero-tolerance policy of the Secretary-General in addressing sexual exploitation and abuse and its implementation in all peacekeeping operations in connection with military, police and civilian personnel. Dismayed by the ongoing cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, we believe that we must provide the Organization with effective means to prevent and punish such acts committed by United Nations personnel against people whose protection has been entrusted to them — acts that are in flagrant contravention of the mandates of the Organization.

In that regard, we must pursue the implementation of the programme of action proposed by the Secretary-General in two previous reports on sexual exploitation and abuse, as embodied by the respective relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. Such measures will have to be harmonized with those of the Security Council, which we have also supported. Accordingly, we believe that the idea of including the topic as an item on the agenda of the General Assembly could be considered. In such an instance, we would need to agree on concerting our efforts in order to avoid duplication, so that the Organization could rely on a coherent, coordinated and unified view on this sensitive subject.

The situation is serious. As has been said, one case is one too many, and we must move away from a zero-tolerance policy to zero in the number of cases. Accordingly, we have welcomed the appointment of the Special Coordinator on improving United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse, Ms. Jane Holl Lute. In line with the current changes under way within the Organization to encourage prevention and protection, the measures to be implemented will have to cover not only punishing those who have been found guilty, thereby avoiding impunity, but also preventing crimes associated with sexual exploitation and abuse and sheltering victims from these crimes. Zero tolerance is essential, of course, but establishing the maximum level of prevention and the protection of victims is also key.

In line with that concern, for the past several years the Argentine Joint Peacekeeping Operations Training Centre of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Argentina has offered cross-cutting courses addressing gender issues in the context of peacekeeping operations, and in particular the prevention of acts of sexual exploitation and abuse. These courses have been conducted by Argentine troops deployed and to be deployed in peacekeeping operations, as well as by troops from other countries who regularly train at the Argentine Training Centre.

In the same vein, we welcome the establishment of the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. Concerning preventive measures and as has been recognized by the General Assembly, we must address the risk factors associated with crimes of sexual exploitation and abuse, including longer periods of troop rotations of contingents, the lack of training on standards of conduct and the living conditions of troops, among others.

The fight against abuse and sexual exploitation in peacekeeping missions is a fundamental task that involves us all and in no way can be allowed to fall prey to the logic of the various bodies or negotiating groups of the Organization. We therefore call for greater cooperation and mutual understanding between the Secretariat, the Security Council and the General Assembly, particularly the troop- and police-contributing countries, in order to engineer and support the necessary measures aimed at their success.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to thank the President for convening today's meeting on such an important topic.

I would like to begin by reaffirming that Uruguay, as a troop-contributing country with a long history of involvement in various peacekeeping operations, considers combating cases of sexual exploitation and abuse to be a very serious issue, and in that regard is firmly committed to the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on such cases. We would also like to emphasize how important it is that policies relating to the matter are always developed in consultation with the troop- and police-contributing countries and that their viewpoints are taken into account.

Those who commit acts of sexual exploitation and abuse are reprehensible in every way, because they are betraying and exploiting the trust of people they should be protecting, in clear violation of the mandate under which they are deployed. I would like to emphasize that in order to deal with such cases, Uruguay, as a troop-contributing country, has been working continually to make progress on improving prevention through pre-deployment training, proper controls on the ground and capable leadership at every level. The Government of Uruguay has adopted provisions that cover accountability for those responsible and support

for the victims, in an affirmation of its commitment to human rights and the dignity of victims. I would like to mention some of the measures we have taken to advance the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse.

All members of national contingents must pass a predeployment course taught by professionals from outside the armed forces, with the participation of the United Nations country office, on human rights, international humanitarian law and policies on sexual exploitation and abuse, gender and the protection of children. All members must sign a predeployment affidavit acknowledging that they have received instruction on those subjects, accepting responsibility if they violate them, and authorizing a deduction from their salaries for the costs associated with their disciplinary repatriation.

Every national contingent is deployed by a national investigative officer who is qualified and trained to carry out any investigations needed in situations when allegations are made against any member of the contingent. Every battalion-level or comparable unit of a national contingent is deployed with a specially trained officer designated an examining magistrate by the courts martial. That means that in cases of complaints of sexual exploitation or abuse for which an investigation determines that a member of the contingent is responsible, the unit commander can submit the case to a court martial. The court will then initiate action through the aforementioned magistrate, who will represent, delegate for and carry out direct orders from the military judge assigned to the case. Such measures ensure that the examining magistrates can act independently of the military commanders and that they can collect the information and evidence needed to ensure that the judiciary, within a framework of due process, can do its work quickly and effectively.

Uruguay has communicated — to the United Nations and to the authorities on the ground where Uruguayan contingents are deployed to missions — the contact information for a Ministry of Foreign Affairs focal point, which victims, or their legal representatives, in possible cases of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by Uruguayan troops, including paternity cases, can contact in order to get advice on the procedures for exercising their rights under Uruguay's legal system and their eligibility.

Uruguay's Ministry of National Defence has established a protocol designed to ensure optimal results in the procedures to be followed, starting when a potential case of sexual exploitation and abuse comes to light and continuing until it is resolved, including by instituting appropriate measures for those responsible and providing advice to victims and their legal representatives to enable them to obtain their rights under national law. A number of the additional measures adopted regarding the responsibilities of the troops deployed in peacekeeping operations have also helped to ensure that in many investigations DNA evidence has been taken from the accused that in some cases has enabled their paternity to be confirmed. The Uruguayan Government has also assigned the aforementioned focal point in support of victims who are mothers in proceedings resulting from paternity issues.

Uruguay is seriously concerned about the negative impact of such cases on the credibility and image of peacekeeping operations and on their ability to carry out their mandates, but we are especially worried about the fact that within the broad range of behaviours that can be considered to be cases of sexual exploitation and abuse involving military, police or civilian personnel, those responsible are guilty of unacceptable behaviour and, while many such cases may involve violations of human rights, all involve an assault on the victims' dignity. It is unfortunate that such cases end by tainting and affecting the heroic and responsible work of more than 100,000 peacekeepers deployed to various missions, some of whom sacrifice their lives in fulfilling their mandates.

I would like to conclude by saying that without prejudice to the fact that the General Assembly is addressing this timely and justifiably important issue in plenary today, Uruguay would like to stress how important it is that the forums functioning in the area, such as the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Fifth Committee, continue their work on the subject.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank the President for convening today's meeting. It is highly necessary to include Member States in an in-depth discussion of the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, and I would like to thank the Egyptian delegation for its initiative.

United Nations peacekeeping is now in its seventieth year. Several hundred thousand peacekeepers have participated in this noble enterprise of maintaining peace for humankind. More than 3,000 have sacrificed

their lives in fulfilling their missions. They fulfil the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations through their concrete action and tireless efforts to safeguard international peace and security, bringing hope to people in areas of conflict and war. Their contribution and sacrifices will live on forever in the memories of people all over the world.

In recent years, a very small number of peacekeepers have committed acts of sexual exploitation and abuse in some countries, seriously damaging peacekeeping's reputation and the image of the United Nations as a whole. China supports the international community's efforts to take comprehensive measures to address the issue properly.

First, we should maintain a zero-tolerance policy on the issue with regard to peacekeepers. We should protect the reputation of the United Nations, ensure that peacekeeping activities develop in a healthy way and take strict measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. When setting relevant norms and laying down guidelines for conduct, the Secretariat should expand its coordination and communication with Member States, and with troop-contributing countries (TCCs) in particular, so as to ensure that peacekeepers deployed to mission areas behave ethically, abide strictly by laws and disciplinary rules and respect local populations.

Secondly, peacekeepers' accountability with regard to claims of sexual exploitation and abuse should be improved. The TCCs should strengthen discipline and accountability. The Security Council and other organs, the Secretariat, TCCs and host countries should strengthen their cooperation in that regard. Non-United Nations forces authorized under a Security Council mandate and the relevant countries should do the same in disciplining their own troops. The Secretariat should provide assistance to TCCs in taking comprehensive measures during all stages of peacekeeping deployment, in order to prevent and combat such acts.

Thirdly, we must take an integrated approach to ensuring the healthy development of peacekeeping operations. The Secretariat has an important responsibility for improving peacekeeping deployment and management. China supports Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Secretariat in applying concrete measures in the search for appropriate solutions. The Security Council, the General Assembly and its relevant committees should coordinate their efforts in accordance with their respective mandates. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, as a policy-deliberating body for peacekeeping, can play a greater role.

Fourthly, attention should be given to building the capacity of troop-contributing countries. The international community should fully consider the difficulties faced by TCCs, particularly developing countries, and build their capacities. All sides should use bilateral and multilateral channels to enhance cooperation with TCCs, provide greater technical assistance and personnel training, and help TCCs improve predeployment training and the quality of their troops, as well as their management, in order to ensure that those who participate in peacekeeping operations are highly disciplined and competent and are able to perform important tasks, thereby improving the overall performance of peacekeeping operations.

Peacekeeping is a common cause for all Member States and plays an important role in safeguarding international and regional peace and security. The international community should recognize the important contributions made by TCCs and numerous peacekeepers to United Nations peacekeeping operations, and work jointly to maintain the good reputation of peacekeeping operations. The international community should also attach importance to, and support, peacekeeping operations so that they can continue to progress.

Mr. Okwudili (Nigeria): I thank President Lykketoft for organizing this timely debate. Sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers has become an issue of grave concern as this unwholesome conduct damages the integrity of the United Nations peacekeeping efforts. We commend the untiring efforts of the Secretary-General to address this issue and the implementation of the zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse.

We applaud the expanded system established by the Secretariat to vet all individuals being deployed as members of military contingents and formed police units for prior misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse while in the service of the United Nations. This measure has occasioned a drop in reported cases of sexual exploitation and abuse from 69 in 2015 to 44 thus far in 2016.

The best policies require inclusive and collective implementation to achieve the desired objective. Efforts to end sexual exploitation and abuse must be our mutual

responsibility and should not be left to the Secretariat alone. Member States must take the lead in seeking measures to effectively tackle this challenge. That requires Member States to commit to preventing acts of sexual exploitation and abuse by our peacekeeping personnel. Concerted efforts must be made to avert a situation whereby the salutary efforts of our Blue Helmets are discredited due to the inappropriate conduct of a few peacekeepers.

We urge expeditious investigation and prosecution of sexual exploitation and abuse offenders and the adoption of measures and an operational environment that lower peacekeepers' inclination towards sexual exploitation and abuse. That will require training and orientation programmes, increased participation of women in peacekeeping missions and the exclusion of perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse in all United Nations missions. Member States must embark on dedicated efforts to stem sexual exploitation and abuse offences by their peacekeeping personnel. The peace we seek cannot be achieved if we allow the reputations of our troops to be tarnished by the indiscretions of a few.

In concluding, I wish to underscore the importance of remedial action for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. We laud the community-based complaint reception mechanism that has been deployed so that sexual exploitation and abuse victims can use confidential and trusted avenues to report sexual exploitation. The mechanism is already operational in seven peacekeeping missions. In that connection, we urge predetermined contributions to the trust fund established to provide health care, psychological support, legal assistance and material needs such as food, clothing and shelter to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Mr. Misra (India): We are grateful to President Lykketoft for convening this debate on strengthening the United Nations system, with reference to sexual exploitation and abuse. United Nations peacekeeping is the most prominent and visible pillar of the United Nations. India, as one of its oldest and largest contributors, remains fully committed to the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and has implemented numerous proactive measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse incidents. India was also the first country to contribute to the trust fund on sexual exploitation and abuse.

We appreciate the need to establish guidelines and policies to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping through a collective and holistic discussion between the Secretariat, the Security Council and the Member States. The troop- and police-contributing countries need to be a part of any formulation on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse in order to achieve a practical and implementable policy.

We also reiterate that troop- and police-contributing countries have the primary responsibility over the conduct and discipline of their personnel, including the investigations of allegations of Sexual exploitation and abuse. The requirements of each Member State's national procedures of jurisdiction must be respected and understood by all parties. Finally, a collective effort should be aimed at preventing sexual exploitation and abuse by identifying and addressing its root causes and implications.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): Let me start by thanking the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting and reiterating Brazil's support for the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. It is extremely important to address the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse collectively, by the wider membership, with troop- and police-contributing countries taking the lead in the implementation of measures to ensure proper accountability for such offenses.

The General Assembly is responsible for creating the necessary guidance for the Secretariat to implement a zero-tolerance policy, including by setting concrete guidelines and criteria on preventive and remedial action and avoiding a culture of impunity within the United Nations. In that regard, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations should continue to play a central role in the implementation of a zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. Efforts should focus on prevention and address root causes and risk factors, such as long rotation periods for troops, decrease in wellness and recreational activities, proximity to civilian sites, and inadequate predeployment training.

Troop- and police-contributing countries have the primary responsibility with regard to the conduct and discipline of their personnel and to the investigations of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. It is therefore fundamental to respect due process and take into consideration the national legislation of Member States. We encourage further extensive and meaningful

consultation among Security Council members, the Secretariat and troop- and police-contributing countries focusing on best practices and lessons learned.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): Let me begin by thanking President Lykketoft for convening this meeting on sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeepers, which has increasingly become a matter of serious concern.

As one of the leading contributors of troops to United Nations peacekeeping operations, Ethiopia wishes to once again reiterate its full and unwavering commitment to the zero-tolerance policy of the Secretary-General on sexual exploitation and abuse. Our peacekeepers are provided with the necessary predeployment training, including on sexual exploitation and abuse. We continue to exert efforts aimed at addressing possible risk factors that may lead to such cases, and whenever we receive any report of sexual misconduct by our peacekeepers, we are determined to carry out the necessary investigation and take appropriate measures accordingly. However, we wish to take this opportunity to raise a couple of points that we believe need to be looked into as we strive to address the problem.

First, allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse are extremely serious and should be based on verifiable facts. But our own limited experiences have shown us that some of those allegations do not meet the minimum evidentiary standard. That is a matter that should be seriously examined because those allegations are already tarnishing the image of not only troop- and police-contributing countries but the United Nations in general.

Secondly, the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers should be looked at in a comprehensive manner with a view to addressing the root causes. That can be done only with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders including, and most importantly, the troop- and police-contributing countries. Without their active engagement, whatever solution that we may envisage cannot address the problem at its core.

Thirdly, the General Assembly is indeed the appropriate forum in which to discuss the matter and find a comprehensive solution to the problem. Our discussion today is only just the beginning, and the relevant intergovernmental committees — and most importantly the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations — should further deliberate on the matter and make the appropriate recommendations on the way forward.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh): We thank President Lykketoft for convening this meeting in response to the request of Egypt on behalf of a number of troop- and police-contributing countries, including Bangladesh.

Bangladesh contributes to the United Nations peacekeeping missions to internationally uphold certain values and principles that we cherish as a nation. Allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers run contrary to those principles and cannot be tolerated. We therefore appreciate the urgency attached to addressing such allegations. The trust, confidence and respect that our peacekeepers have earned over decades cannot be compromised by the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse, for those hosting our peacekeepers must not feel vulnerable to the people whom they consider to be their custodians of peace.

In line with our firm zero-tolerance approach to sexual exploitation and abuse by our peacekeepers, we recognize the need to address this scourge in a decisive and sustained manner. The various layers of screening, oversight and monitoring being introduced should help to further strengthen the firewall against such aberrations. In the case of any such allegation and occurrence, the importance of appropriate accountability and sound investigation cannot be overemphasized. Disciplinary and criminal justice and measures in line with corresponding national legislation need to be enforced and reported with due diligence. Remedial action in support of victims in the case of proven allegations is a non-derogable responsibility.

The Secretary-General has positively identified certain underlying factors for the occurrence of sexual exploitation and abuse, beyond some random allegations. It is our shared responsibility to support the Secretary-General to address those factors to the extent possible. While such factors in no way create a pretext for such allegations, it is important that the lessons learned from various contexts be captured in an objective fashion and appropriate response strategies be devised through consultations with all concerned at the field level. At Headquarters, it is critical that sexual exploitation and abuse issues be made part of triangular consultations involving the Security Council, the troop- and police- contributing countries and the Secretariat.

Against the backdrop of the momentum created for addressing the challenge, we note that discussions are taking place in various forums in line with their respective mandates. That may, however, preclude the possibility of working out a well-calibrated and cohesive narrative through the interface of these various bodies. We therefore see merit in the suggestion to have regular, all-encompassing discussions on the subject, under the purview of the General Assembly and with the involvement of the wider membership. Such meetings should also be the forum for sharing any relevant Secretariat documents and guidelines with a view to enhancing transparency and ownership across the board.

We need to recognize that addressing sexual exploitation and abuse is an objective that would not be served through publicity and sensationalism. That overarching need for maintaining strict oversight and compliance would primarily be served through well-designed and rigorous predeployment training; sound, early and credible investigations; and effective prosecution in accordance with applicable national legal provisions. All those would require clear standard-setting, transparent and inclusive dialogue, and sustained investment in capacity-building when there are such needs. As has been articulated a number of times, it would be counterproductive to take an approach of collective punishment for the misconduct and crimes of certain individuals.

The media and other partners also need to be sensitized to the importance of upholding the image and credibility of peacekeeping missions while demanding accountability.

Mr. Makharoblishvili (Georgia): At the outset, allow me to join others in welcoming the decision to convene this meeting under agenda item 122, "Strengthening of the United Nations system", on the critical issue of addressing sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeeping personnel.

We believe that today's debate will contribute substantially to strengthening the United Nations and supporting peacekeeping goals that we aim to achieve collectively. Let me stress that Georgia has significant experience as a contributor to international security and stability through providing military contingents as part of peace operations in different parts of the world. Despite the fact that 20 per cent of our territory remains under illegal foreign occupation and hundreds of thousands of Georgian internally displaced persons and refugees — the victims of ethnic cleansing — are denied the right to return to their homes, we remain committed to international peace efforts throughout the world.

In 2014, a Georgian military contingent took part in the operation in the Central African Republic, led by the European Union (EU), the aim of which was to support regional and international efforts to restore stability to the country and to promote a process of political transformation. In 2015, Georgia continued its participation in the EU-led missions in the Central African Republic and Mali. Georgia remains one of the largest non-NATO troop contributors to the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan. Georgian military personnel have proudly served in Iraq and the Balkans.

As we continue to look for ways to enhance support to international peacekeeping and to make it more efficient and result-oriented, we support addressing current challenges in a comprehensive and transparent way, including in the response to the crimes of sexual exploitation and abuse allegedly committed by peacekeepers. Georgia acknowledges the centrality of protecting civilians and attaches great importance to the safety of population as a critical component of stability, security and sustainable peace. In that regard, Georgia is fully committed to a zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping and to ensuring the full accountability of perpetrators.

We believe that peacekeeping is also about trust. In that regard, the Georgian Government and the Georgian armed forces quickly reacted to the allegations voiced by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in January regarding cases of the sexual abuse of minors by members of foreign military forces in the Central African Republic so as to ensure an exemplary response in terms of promptness and readiness to conduct investigation. The Minister of Defence of Georgia responded to the report by immediately issuing a statement condemning any violence against the local civilian population and highlighted the importance of the timely and proper investigation of the matter, She called for accountability to be upheld and for administrative measures to be taken if the crimes were proved. In addition, the Minister of Defence of Georgia issued an order creating an inter-agency investigation team. The activities of the team were coordinated at the highest level, and its visit to the Central African Republic was approved by the Government of Georgia.

The Minister of Defence of Georgia communicated the willingness of the Government of Georgia to properly and adequately investigate the allegations by creating an inter-agency investigation team and by planning a visit to Bangui, to include the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the European Union Military Committee, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, representatives of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the Executive Director of UNICEF and the Legal Director of Médecins Sans Frontières. In her communications, the Minister voiced her concern about the allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse and asked for the engagement of relevant parties in the investigation process by assigning respective protection of civilian advisers on the ground, while requesting full access of the inter-agency investigation team to the available documentation.

To ensure a well-coordinated and successful process of investigating sexual exploitation and abuse, the inter-agency team included the representatives of national law enforcement, international human rights and child protective services, including a senior investigators of major criminal cases from the Military Police, the Department of Special Affairs, a lieutenant-colonel from the General Inspection Service of the Special affairs at the Ministry of Defense of Georgia, a prosecutor from the Prosecutor General's Office of Georgia, international legal and human rights expert, psychologists and interpreters.

In June, the inter-agency team travelled to the Central African Republic to conduct the investigation. The members of the group carried out their inquiry and attended the process of interrogating the alleged victims and identifying the perpetrators. During the visit to the Central African Republic, the investigative group closely cooperated with local and international organizations, including EU Military Advisory Mission, MINUSCA and UNICEF. The United Nations agencies acknowledged the team as highly professional and as setting an example for other countries.

The materials collected during the visit to the Central African Republic — including protocols, reports and other legal documents — were brought to Georgia and are being carefully studied. At this stage, according to the preliminary data collected by the investigation, no sign of Georgian soldiers' involvement in the crime has been revealed. Should the results of the investigation prove them innocent, Georgia would welcome public denunciation of the allegations, as this is of great importance to our national honour, which has been earned by serving with the highest standards of ethical conduct and even at the cost of the precious lives of Georgian personnel.

In conclusion, I would like to stress our hope that the aforementioned measures undertaken by the Government of Georgia will become a part of systemic and sustained change at the United Nations in dealing with the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse more seriously than we have in the past.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate. The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 122.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I should like to consult members regarding the closing date of the seventieth session of the General Assembly.

Members will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 18 September 2015, the General Assembly approved the recommendation of the General Committee that the Assembly close on Monday, 12 September 2016. Members are aware that in accordance with resolution 52/214 A and decision 52/468, 12 September 2016 has been designated as an official holiday at United Nations Headquarters for the observance of Eid al-Adha.

In this regard, I would like to propose to the Assembly that it postpone the date of closing of the seventieth session to Tuesday, 13 September. If there is no objection, may I take it that the Assembly agrees to postpone the date of closing of the seventieth session to Tuesday, 13 September?

It was so decided

The Acting President: I would like to take this opportunity to inform members that the closing plenary meeting of the seventieth session will be held at 3 p.m. on Tuesday, 13 September, in the Hall. Immediately thereafter, the General Assembly will declare open the seventy-first session and convene the 1st meeting of the seventy-first session.

I would like to inform members that, in order to allow for a smooth proceeding of the two meetings, the

General Assembly Hall will have the seating protocol of the seventy-first session as of 3 p.m. Therefore, the delegation of the Plurinational State of Bolivia will occupy the first seat in the Hall.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

United Nations A/70/PV.116

General Assembly
Seventieth session

Official Records

116th plenary meeting
Friday, 9 September 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lykketoft ..... (Denmark)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 14 (*continued*)

2001-2010: Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa

Draft resolution (A/70/L.62)

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly considered, in a joint debate, agenda item 66 and its sub-items (a) and (b) and agenda item 14 at its 34th and 35th plenary meeting, on 16 October 2015.

I now give the floor to the representative of Chad to introduce draft resolution A/70/L.62.

Mr. Abdallah (Chad) (*spoke in French*): As the representative of the country that holds the chairmanship of the African Leaders Malaria Alliance (ALMA), I am pleased to introduce, on behalf of the Group of African States, draft resolution A/70/L.62, entitled "Consolidating gains and accelerating efforts to control and eliminate malaria in developing countries, particularly in Africa, by 2030".

The draft resolution has been revised for technical reasons, as compared to last year's resolution 69/325, because of the alignment in commitments agreed upon in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). During the negotiations on the draft resolution, we considered the World Health Organization *2015 World Malaria Report*, which shows a considerable decrease in malaria throughout the world over the past 15 years. Target 6 (c) of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), on malaria, has been achieved, and we have seen a 75 per cent decline in 57 countries in the number of malaria cases at the national level by 2013. The decrease in deaths from malaria has made a major contribution to the progress on Target 4 of the MDGs, namely, in the reduction by two thirds of the mortality rate of children under 5 from 1990 to 2015.

Despite that remarkable progress, many challenges remain. Many African countries continue to make inadequate progress in achieving national and international goals. In 2014, the estimate was that 269 million people had no mosquito nets or lived in an unprotected place; 15 million pregnant women at risk of malaria had not received any preventive treatment; and between 68 and 80 million children had not been properly treated.

The African Leaders Malaria Alliance and the Asia-Pacific Leaders Malaria Alliance are fighting to eradicate malaria by 2030. Under the presidency of Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, Chairman-in-Office of the African Union and Chairman of the African Leaders Malaria Alliance, the Heads of State and Governments of Africa, at the margins of the African Union Summit held in Kigali in July adopted a new road map to completely eliminate malaria in Africa by 2030. In the 2013 Abuja Declaration, Africa had already planned to eradicate malaria by 2030, and the Abudja Declaration is also a key pillar for the implementation of the African Union 2063 Agenda.

The World Technical Strategy for Malaria 2016-2030, adopted by the World Health Assembly in May 2015, establishes ambitious, but nevertheless

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achievable, objectives by 2030, namely, to reduce by at least 90 per cent cases of malaria and associated mortality cases. According to the WHO, when the intermediate objectives of 2020 and 2025 are realized, almost 3 billion people will be spared from malaria and 10 million lives will be saved, and when the 2030 targets are achieved $4 billion in additional economic benefits are expected.

The achievement of the intermediary goals is the target of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in terms of fighting malaria. It will involve new intensified interventions, which have been tried and tested — the strengthening of monitoring systems and ensuring continued investment in research and development — and will lead to the necessary innovations in terms of tools and methods. That will also contribute to fighting infectious diseases, such as the Zika virus.

An impact study of expenditures shows that an investment of $1 per capita to fight malaria in Africa leads to a per capita increase of the national gross domestic product of $6.75. The increase in national expenditures will therefore have to be supported by increased external funding, especially in countries where the heavy burden of malaria is accompanied from the outset by low levels of per capita incomes, which means the population lives in a very fragile situation or in a situation of crisis. Therefore, we have especially to strengthen health systems and meet the resistance to medication and insecticide by seeking in particular to provide countries suffering from malaria with infrastructure, health-care services, monitoring and laboratory services. A working mechanism for data collection so they can respond rapidly and effectively is also needed during malaria outbreaks. We encourage the sharing at the interregional level of knowledge, experience and lessons learned in the framework of fighting malaria and its eradication, particularly involving Africa, the Asia-Pacific and the Latin American regions.

In conclusion, I thank all Member States for their constructive participation in the negotiation process and for their active support, which signals their commitment to eradicate malaria by 2030.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/70/L.62, entitled "Consolidating gains and accelerating efforts to control and eliminate malaria in developing countries, particularly in Africa, by 2030".

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Pollard (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, in addition to those delegations listed in document A/70/L.62, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Monaco, Myanmar, Serbia, Sweden, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/70/L.62.

Draft resolution A/70/L.62 was adopted (resolution 70/300)

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 14?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 15 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Draft resolution (A/70/L.63)

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly considered agenda item 15, jointly with agenda items 116 and 123, at its 52nd plenary meeting, on 13 November 2015. Members will recall that the General Assembly considered agenda item 15 at its 75th and 82nd plenary meetings, on 14 and 23 December 2015, retroactively, and adopted resolution 70/110 under this item. Members will also recall that the Assembly considered the item at its 19th plenary meeting, on 1 April, and adopted resolution 70/259 under this item. Members will further recall that the Assembly considered the item at its 112th plenary meeting, on 25 July 2016, and adopted resolution 70/293.

I now give the floor to the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/70/L.63.

Mr. Braun (Germany): First, let me first thank my colleague from Gabon, Ambassador Baudelaire Ndong Ella, the United Nations Group of Friends on Poaching and Illicit Wildlife Trafficking and all other supporters for their strong commitment to this significant issue and for the constructive work atmosphere in preparing this draft resolution.

The General Assembly adopted the first-ever resolution (resolution 69/314) on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife on 30 July 2015 — you mentioned it, Mr. President. Since then, we have raised global awareness remarkably and put this topic back on the agenda. But despite that success, the statistics on poaching and illicit wildlife trafficking are reaching all-time highs. That is an entirely unacceptable situation.

The global illegal wildlife trade is valued at approximately $19 billion annually. That makes it the fourth-largest sector of the illegal trade, following narco-trafficking, human trafficking and product piracy. As we speak, four to five elephants are being poached in African countries. According to the first-ever report of the Secretary-General on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife, published in June, 100 elephants are poached per day, adding up to a very sad 40,000 elephants annually out of a total remaining population of only 500,000. That means 8 per cent of the world's elephant population is being killed by poaching every year. In addition, in 2015, a deplorable record high of 1,500 rhinos were poached. Those iconic species draw much attention, but many lesser-known species are also brutally exploited. Wildlife is in more danger than ever, despite all our efforts at the regional, national and international levels. Clearly, that is not acceptable. If poaching numbers continue to increase in that way, elephants, rhinos and many other species may face global extinction during our lifetime. The time for action is now, not tomorrow.

Equally disturbing are the negative political, economic, social and environmental effects of illicit traffic in wildlife. The scale and nature of wildlife crime must be seen as a pressing global problem that requires shared solutions at all levels. The *World Wildlife Crime Report: Trafficking in protected species*, issued by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in May, identifies wildlife traffickers from more than 80 nations. That illustrates that wildlife crime is a truly global challenge. All regions of the world are implicated, either as a source, as a transit or as a destination of the illegal wildlife trade. No Government, country, region or agency working alone will be able to succeed in suppressing it. The need for an enhanced collective effort within and among States, regions and agencies is obvious. That includes working across source, transit and destination States and tackling both demand and supply. The fight against wildlife crime is our common, shared responsibility.

In September 2015 we agreed on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). Target 15.7 calls on Member States to take

> "urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products".

In addition, target 15.c calls for enhanced

> "global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species".

As a consequence of the resolution adopted in July 2015, many countries have undertaken further actions to combat illicit trafficking in wildlife by strengthening legislation. However, one third of Member States still responded in a United Nations survey that illicit trafficking in wildlife would not be treated as a serious crime under their national legislation. We must ensure the full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and the draft resolution before us. The report of the Secretary-General offers a range of further measures we all can apply to fight the illegal wildlife trade.

In conclusion, together we have been successful in raising much-needed attention to this topic. Now it is up to all of us to maintain the momentum to ensure a significant and immediate reduction of the alarming numbers I mentioned earlier. It is our responsibility to ensure the survival of many endangered species. We stand ready to continue the fight against illicit wildlife trafficking and, with all our support, we will ensure that this topic remains a priority on the international agenda. In this case, too, the words of Secretary General Ban Ki-moon must come true: 2015 was the year of commitment, 2016 must be the year of implementation.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Pollard (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): The present statement

is made in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

By paragraph 4 of draft resolution A/70/L.63, the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General, taking into account Economic and Social Council resolution 2013/40, to present, based on inputs from Member States and other relevant stakeholders, updated information to the Assembly at its seventy-first session on the global status of illicit trafficking in wildlife, including poaching and the illegal trade, and on the implementation of the present draft resolution and to present proposals for possible future action.

The implementation of the request in paragraph 4 of the draft resolution would require extrabudgetary resources in the amount of $71,000 for the preparation and translation into all six languages of one report. The activities related to the request in paragraph 4 of the draft resolution would be carried out provided that the extrabudgetary resources mentioned are made available. Accordingly, the adoption of draft resolution A/70/L.63 would not give rise to any financial implications under the programme budget.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution A/70/L.63, entitled "Tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife".

I give the floor again to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Pollard (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, in addition to those delegations listed in document A/70/L.63, the following countries have also become sponsors of A/70/L.63: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chad, Georgia, Liechtenstein, Madagascar, Malaysia, Malta, Monaco, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/70/L.63?

Draft resolution A/70/L.63 was adopted (resolution 70/301).

The President: Before giving the floor to the speaker in explanation of position, I remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Shearman (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom is proud to sponsor this important resolution on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife. We would like to thank and congratulate Gabon and Germany once more for their continued dedication and hard work in bringing people and countries together on this pressing issue.

The first-ever General Assembly resolution on the illegal wildlife trade (resolution resolution 69/314), adopted last year, was a milestone. It demonstrated a powerful and growing consensus that the illegal wildlife trade was an issue worthy of global attention at the highest levels of Government. It is an issue that calls out for global cooperation across Governments, sectors, regions and continents. We know why it is important. Some of our most iconic species are being driven to the point of extinction. Organized criminal networks are making untold profits. Rangers are being killed. The impacts are wide-reaching — corruption, criminality, decreased chances for sustainable livelihoods — and could be permanent. Once these animals are gone, they are gone for good.

The United Kingdom therefore welcomes this resolution on illicit trafficking of wildlife and remains firmly committed to working with our international partners to end this abhorrent trade. It is vital that we build momentum. The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, to be held later this month, will be a significant milestone and an opportunity to take international efforts further. Then, on 17 November, Viet Nam will host the third global high-level conference on the illegal wildlife trade in Hanoi, to follow the London and Kasane Conferences on the Illegal Wildlife Trade. That will be a crucial opportunity to uphold the high-level political momentum that this issue so urgently requires. The United Kingdom is pleased to support the conference.

Resolution 70/302, which we have just adopted, shows clearly that we are making progress in our recognition of the issue and in our resolve to act. It is an important and reassuring signal of global commitment that the battle has not been won, and it is vital that we redouble our efforts and act now to reverse the catastrophic loss of wildlife through the illegal trade.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 15.

Agenda items 15 and 116 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields.

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Draft resolution (A/70/L.61)

The President: Members will recall that, under agenda items 15 and 116, the Assembly held the United Nations Summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, at its 4th to 12th plenary meetings, from 25 to 27 September 2015, and adopted resolution 70/1 at its 4th plenary meeting, on 25 September 2015. Members will also recall that the Assembly considered in joint debate agenda items 15, 116 and 123, at its 52nd plenary meeting, on 13 November 2015.

Members will further recall that the Assembly considered agenda items 15 and 116, at its 81st plenary meeting, on 21 December 2015, and adopted decision 70/539; at its 93rd plenary meeting, on 27 April 2016, and adopted resolution 70/262; at its 108th plenary meeting, on 30 June 2016, and adopted resolution 70/290; and at its 114th plenary meeting, on 29 July 2016, and adopted resolution 70/299.

As members all know, the current crisis related to migration and refugees has caused the worst humanitarian crisis since the Second World War. The numbers are staggering, and the genuine loss and pain these people are suffering should be unbearable for all of us. As we speak today, millions of Syrian civilians continue to suffer, and basic humanitarian assistance is denied to millions more right across the world. It is frustrating to see that, despite the generosity of some, in a global economy worth more than $77 trillion, somehow we are not even able to fill a humanitarian funding gap of $10 to $15 billion. It is equally frustrating that we have not been able to end the conflicts and the disgraceful attacks on civilians that are at the root of much of today's displacement.

In January, I joined the Secretary-General in Dubai for the launch of the report of the High-level Panel on Humanitarian Financing, and during the first six months of this year I visited refugees in Jordan, Ethiopia and Turkey. As members know, the Assembly, in close cooperation with the Secretary-General, has been working hard to address the crisis. In both plenary and informal General Assembly meetings, including the humanitarian response in Africa and through the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, on which I once again congratulate the Secretary-General and the Turkish host, we have sought to bring forward a better, more just, more equitable and more comprehensive response. The high-level meeting of the General Assembly to be held on 19 September will build on the achievements of those endeavours.

I wish to sincerely congratulate Her Excellency Mrs. Dina Kawar, former Permanent Representative of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and His Excellency Mr. David Donoghue, Permanent Representative of Ireland, for ably and resolutely leading the negotiations on the modalities and the draft outcome of the high-level meeting. I also wish to thank civil society and others within this cause to reach higher. Of course, I wish to thank Member States for their commitment to bringing the negotiations to a successful conclusion.

Members today have the opportunity to transmit draft resolution A/70/L.61, which contains the draft outcome document, entitled "New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants", for adoption by Heads of State and Government and other high-level representatives on 19 September. In doing so, let us recall that the United Nations was created 70 years ago with the fundamental purpose of promoting peace, protecting vulnerable populations and ensuring human rights. The draft New York Declaration reflects the collective commitment of the international community to pursue that objective.

We must ensure that the issue of large movements of refugees and migrants continues to be the subject of our focus and engagement. We must continue the strong cooperation by all concerned in finalizing the two compacts and preparing the international conference on migration, and we must not allow our commitment to some of the world's most vulnerable people to weaken.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/70/L.61.

I call on the representative of Ireland on a point of order.

Mr. Rawe (Ireland): I have a small point of order. But first, on behalf of the co-facilitators, may I also take this opportunity to thank Member States for their constructive engagement and excellent cooperation over the past several months as we negotiated the modalities and the draft declaration for the 19 September summit on large movements of refugees

and migrants. Ambassadors Donoghue and Kawar are also very grateful for the support they received during the negotiations from the broader United Nations system, as well as for the important contribution by civil society.

On the point of order, with reference to draft resolution A/70/L.61, when processing the document editorially, it was initially agreed that the reference to the name of the office-holder in paragraph 62 of the draft declaration and in paragraph 13 of appendix II would be omitted, in order to align with common practice. It is now proposed to revert to the text as agreed by consensus on 2 August by reinserting the name of the office holder, Peter Sutherland, in both cases. If agreed, I understand that the draft outcome document contained in draft resolution A/70/L.61, which will be transmitted to the high-level meeting on 19 September for adoption, as noted, will reflect those revisions. A number of Member States have made very clear their wish to see that change made.

The 19 September summit will be a critically important and timely event. For the first time ever, the 193 States Members of the United Nations will come together to comprehensively and collectively address the global challenge of large movements of refugees and migrants. The commitments that we have agreed together, along with the draft global compacts on refugees and migrants to be adopted within two years, have the potential to improve the lives of millions of people around the world who need protection and support to live in safety and dignity.

Finally, warm thanks are due to you, Mr. President, and your Office for your steadfast support, trust and advice during this process. Please accept our thanks and every good wish as your term of office draws to a close.

The President: I understand that there is a request for an oral amendment to draft resolution A/70/L.61 to include the name of Peter Sutherland, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Migration, in paragraph 62 of the draft declaration and in paragraph 13 of appendix II. That proposal — reinserting the name of the office-holder in both places — would revert to the draft text agreed upon by consensus on 2 August.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt resolution A/70/L.61, as orally revised?

Draft resolution A/70/L.61, as orally revised, was adopted (resolution 70/302).

The President: I shall now give the floor to speakers who wish to make statements following the adoption of resolution 70/302.

I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Ms. Adamson (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States.

Let me warmly congratulate you, Sir, on the successful outcome of the negotiations on the draft political declaration and its two appendices (resolution 70/302, annex) for the 19 September high-level meeting of the General Assembly, including the oral revision, which was just been agreed to, at the request of Ireland and others. Let me in particular thank the co-facilitators and their teams for their efforts to bring about a successful conclusion in this important exercise.

We note with satisfaction that the negotiations and the summit itself reflect growing awareness of the truly global nature of refugee and migrant issues, as well as an understanding of the need for global consensus and cooperation. The high-level meeting will mark a unique and important moment in which the international community will come together to affirm the shared responsibility in responding to large flows of migrants and refugees. We are pleased to see the notion of responsibility-sharing and the importance of international cooperation in response to migration and refugee flows reflected in the draft outcome document. The establishment of a global compact for refugees and a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration in the upcoming two years will be an important next step in moving this important agenda forward. We believe our strong participation will emphasize and confirm our steadfast political commitment and major contributions to the effective management of related issues in all their facets, in the name of human dignity and in line with our international humanitarian and human rights obligations.

While recognizing the efforts of the co-facilitators in finding common ground, the European Union and its member States regret that the consultations period did not allow more time to consider issues that would have benefited from further reflection. We would therefore like to clarify our understanding of certain points.

We would like to take this opportunity to express a clarification with respect to paragraph 33 as it currently stands. Although in some exceptional cases the detention of children might be required for the purpose of determining migration status, we reiterate that the detention of children should be used only as a measure of last resort, in the least restricted setting, for the shortest possible period of time, and with full respect for the human rights of the child taken into account, as a primary consideration, in the best interests of the child.

We are fully committed to promoting, protecting and respecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, particularly children, regardless of their status, and to upholding mainstream labour standards for regular migrant workers as we do for any worker in our own countries. It is our understanding that paying attention to the application of minimum labour standards for migrant workers regardless of status does not carry any responsibilities to provide residence permits to irregular migrants. With regard to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the European Union and its member States believe that the legal frameworks in place within the European Union provide equivalent or greater protection for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of migrant workers as compared with the Convention.

In paragraphs 42 and 58 and the reference to all States' obligations to readmit their own nationals, we believe that this obligation is essential for a well-functioning global migration management system. Any interpretation of these two points must be in line with the wording of paragraph 35 of resolution 68/141, adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2013, which emphasizes the obligation of all States to accept the return of their nationals and calls upon all States to facilitate the return of any person who has been determined not to be in need of international protection. We welcome the wording on enhanced cooperation with respect to return and readmission and reiterate that a well-functioning system of cooperation in this field is indeed conducive for expanding and creating new legal avenues for migration, which is mutually beneficial and can in turn promote people-to-people contact.

We recognize the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as the global lead organization on migration. The integration of the IOM into the United Nations system and the development of the global compact on migration are two processes that will strengthen cooperation on migration issues at the global level. We are committed to actively engaging in those processes.

We welcome a change in title, which makes it more intelligible, including to the wider public. While we understand that introducing a title is a prerogative of the President of the General Assembly, we would welcome broader consultations on such issues in future.

Lastly, we would like to reaffirm our commitment to ensuring the effective implementation of the draft political declaration and to reaffirm our engagement in the upcoming negotiations on a draft global compact for migration to be concluded by 2018. We look forward to the high-level meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants on 19 September.

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of position, may I remind delegations that explanations of position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Today, the world of migration and protection-of-refugees issues is changing rapidly, as those issues are becoming increasingly acute. Despite the efforts undertaken by the international community and States themselves, the gravity of migration issues is not diminishing, which burdens us with the task of further strengthening international cooperation so as to develop new joint comprehensive approaches to finding the optimal economic, social and political solutions to such issues. In that regard, we fully support the initiative of holding, on 19 September, a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to address large movements of refugees and migrants. We also support most of the provisions set out in the draft outcome document (resolution 70/302, annex) that we are transmitting to the seventy-first session of the General Assembly today.

We are grateful to the co-facilitators of the negotiation process for their efforts in achieving compromise. In our understanding, agreement on the draft outcome document without disseminating the final version for approval through the so-called silence procedure does not harm the established United Nations practice of using that procedure in similar cases. We will insist on adherence to it henceforth.

It is understood that any formulation of the draft outcome document, as well as actions aimed at its implementation, cannot run counter to the fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, objectivity and independence, nor can it violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States or be implemented without the agreement of the countries involved. In our view, the current difficult migration situation, first and foremost in European countries, is the fallout of irresponsible interference into the internal affairs of sovereign States in the Middle East and North Africa, their destabilization and the forceful removal of undesirable Governments. That has led to a collapse in nationhood, humanitarian catastrophes, civil wars and the rise of terrorism. All that has made life in those regions untenable due both to the threat that posed to human lives and to the disregard for human rights and fundamental freedoms, which has led to massive outflows of refugees and migrants from that region. We believe that States actively participating in such interference must be held primarily responsible for providing aid to the victims, refugees and forced migrants.

It is our understanding that none of the provisions in the draft outcome document, including those relating to so-called shared responsibility, create additional international, legal and financial obligations. That is equally true of the provisions dealing with issues relating to relocating refugees.

Of course, what I have said here does not mean that we are distancing ourselves from solving issues of refugees and migrants. We continue to contribute significantly to international cooperation for development realized within United Nations specialized bodies. We also support the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the fulfilment of the functions entrusted to him.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon): I would like, first of all, to express our appreciation to the co-facilitators, Ambassadors Dina Kawar and David Donoghue, and thank them for their efforts and leadership throughout the drafting process. The draft outcome document (resolution 70/302, annex), together with its appendices, which will be adopted at the highest level next week by the General Assembly, is indeed the result of a complex process and many compromises along the way. While we acknowledge the consensus reached on the draft document, now entitled the "New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants", my delegation would like to make the following remarks.

Lebanon believes equitable international burden- and responsibility-sharing to be indispensable when responding to mass displacements of refugees, particularly in the attempt to meet refugees' needs in terms of shelter, food and essential services, such as access to water supplies, sanitation, electricity, education and basic health care. That can best be achieved through the provision of direct humanitarian and development assistance to host countries, including through United Nations entities operating at the country level.

Lebanon reaffirms that the priority goal should remain the return of refugees to their countries. In that regard, Lebanon reaffirms its respect for the principles of non-refoulement in accordance with international refugee law, and will continue to provide international protection to all those who qualify for refugee status on its territory until the return to their countries becomes possible. Furthermore, Lebanon believes that, in exercise of their right to return, refugees decide to go back to their homeland even before political solutions are achieved, they should be allowed to do so without any impediment. That is how Lebanon understands the contents of paragraph 76 of the draft outcome document.

Lebanon is a small country with limited resources and territorial space. It has one of the highest population densities in the world and has been, for over 150 years, a country of emigration, not immigration. Lebanon is therefore not in a position to accept the integration, naturalization or any other form of permanent resettlement of refugees on its territory. With more than 1.2 million registered Syrian refugees — and for more than seven decades over 400,000 Palestinian refugees — Lebanon is today the country with the world's highest ratio of refugees and displaced persons, both per capita and per square kilometre. As a result, Lebanon faces humanitarian challenges that go way beyond its capacities and which could threaten its very existence.

It is our hope that the high-level debate next week will raise awareness of the challenges faced by countries hosting large movements of refugees, like Lebanon, and the necessity to recommit at a global level to the principles of equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing, particularly with developing countries. We look forward to a successful and fruitful meeting.

Mr. Gómez Camacho (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico welcomes the adoption of the draft outcome document (resolution 70/302, annex), entitled New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. The draft document represents a watershed in the way in which we respond to the multidimensional reality of migration. We recognize and commend the difficult work of the co-facilitators, Ambassadors Donoghue and Kawar. Building consensus among Member States regarding migrants' human rights continues to be a strategic priority of my Government. However, Mexico regrets that some aspects of the draft declaration are not sufficiently strong, which leads us to this explanation of position.

The Mexican Government believes that the draft New York declaration identifies important commitments at each stage of migration. We must continue to work towards its implementation in order to create a virtuous cycle of migration.

While Mexico welcomes the commitments regarding border controls based on full respect for human rights and the rights of refugees, it is our view that the most recent resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Human Rights Council on this issue must continue to inform future discussions in the light of the draft declaration.

Mexico is a country of origin, transit and destination and return of migrants, which include unaccompanied boys, girls and adolescents. We reaffirm the findings of the Committee on the Rights of the Child as set forth in paragraph 86 and recommendation 79 of its General Comment No. 6 (CRC/GC/2005/6), particularly the need to identify a durable solution that addresses all unaccompanied children's protection needs and consider their best interests in any determination of immigration status. Following a rights-based approach, the search for a durable solution commences with analysing the possibility of family reunification. The punitive detention of minors due to their parents' immigration status is a violation of children's rights. Member States will have to explore and promote alternatives to such detention, working hand in hand with civil society to ensure that minors have access to education, health care and psychosocial support. We hope to see greater commitment in that regard in the future.

We are convinced that the United Nations is the ideal forum for managing migration with a human face. The upcoming negotiations towards a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration represents a historic opportunity to show that the United Nations can meet those expectations. Mexico warmly welcomes the holding of an international conference for the adoption of such a text in 2018. Although it is not reflected in the draft outcome, we would like to repeat our offer to host a preparatory conference on the topic. We call upon all Member States, the Secretariat, the International Organization for Migration and civil society to work with resolve, transparency and ambition to reach a global compact.

Mr. Tsutsumi (Japan): At the outset, we would like to welcome the transmittal of the draft New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 70/302, annex). Due to the complexity of the issue, there have been many differences of opinion among Member States. We particularly thank the co-facilitators, Ambassadors Donoghue and Kawar, as well as the Secretariat, for leading the difficult negotiations towards consensus. We sincerely hope that the adoption of the draft declaration at the highest level at the summit will be an important step towards resolving this global challenge. I would like to make a few points on the draft declaration.

First, Japan regrets that the draft declaration focuses only on the cross-border movements of people and could not shed light on internally displaced persons (IDPs). The international community, including the United Nations, should further address the plight of IDPs.

Secondly, we welcome the fact that the draft declaration stresses the importance of improving the self-reliance and resilience of host countries and communities through strengthening the humanitarian development nexus. Japan also shares the view that the international community should support host countries and communities through burden- and responsibility-sharing.

Lastly, I would like to add a few words on the financial implications of the draft declaration. Although we support the draft declaration, Japan would like to express its serious concern that, even as we speak, Member States are not yet informed about the details of its extra-budgetary implications. We understand that the additional resource requirements of the draft declaration are partly subject to future negotiations among Member States, such as the modality of the negotiations on a draft gobal compact for safe, orderly

and regular migration. However, there could have been an informal way to provide information related to probable financial implications, to the extent that the Secretariat was then aware. Since we adopted resolution 70/302 without knowing its additional budgetary requirements, we strongly expect that the additional costs for the Secretariat in implementing the draft outcome document will be reduced as much as possible and absorbed into the budget for the 2016-2017 biennium. We expect that the issue will be further discussed in the Fifth Committee.

Mr. Roet (Israel): First, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and acknowledge the effort invested by the co-facilitators and Member States in producing the draft outcome document of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 70/302, annex). Israel is deeply sensitive to the unprecedented numbers of refugees and migrants that the world has witnessed in recent years and is aware of the impetus behind the important draft declaration we have agreed to transmit today.

The State of Israel has absorbed hundreds of thousands of refugees since its founding. The Jewish people, in its long history, are all too familiar with the trials and hardships of the refugee and migrant experience. Therefore, we feel genuine solidarity with the plight of today's refugees and migrants, and intimately understand the destabilizing effects of and the personal toll taken by such massive levels of human mobility.

At the same time, Israel is a society that is a living testimony to the many blessings and the richness of diversity that migrant communities bring to the countries that absorb them. Israel recognizes the need for a coordinated and thoughtful response to that phenomenon at the international level. We also recognize the central role that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in particular can play in helping to find durable solutions to refugee situations, as recognized in the draft outcome document and its appendices. As the draft document acknowledges, the response needs to show sensitivity and flexibility while taking account of

> "different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities." (*resolution 70/302, annex, para. 21*)

Large movements of refugees and migrants demand an international response that is humane, effective and respectful while, at the same time, respecting the right of States to manage and control their borders and ensure security, prosperity and stability within them. It is important to note — as stipulated in the draft document we have agreed to transmit today — that the draft outcome document and its appendices constitute a political declaration that does not establish or recognize any new legal rights or obligations.

The draft outcome document and its appendices also recognize that each refugee and migrant situation is different in nature and should be addressed with attention to its specific circumstances, with a view to adopting mechanisms and solutions that respond to, and take account of, the particular political context, the practical reality on the ground and the legitimate needs and interests of all those affected by the specific situation. That is why international legal and policy approaches to large-scale refugee and migrant situations must in practice advance a flexible and practical response that considers a variety of options, including integration, resettlement in third countries, repatriation to the country of nationality and a wide range of factors and variables.

Israel views the draft outcome document and its annex as a call to action to respond to the recent wave of refugee and migrant populations, in a manner that is sensitive, non-dogmatic and practical. We look forward to contributing to the advancement of the document's goals in that spirit.

Mr. Rivero Rosario (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba joins the consensus on resolution 70/302 in adopting the draft outcome document, whose annex contains the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, although we believe that the Declaration should address the causes of the high number of refugees and migrants directly and more thoroughly. We believe that those who provoke or help to foment international armed conflicts should shoulder the burdens and responsibilities of dealing with refugees. Only genuine international cooperation will enable us to help both the countries taking in refugees and refugees' countries of origin.

Where migrants are concerned, the Declaration should address the negative brain-drain effect that irregular and unregulated migration can have on developing countries, and which does not help such countries achieve their internationally agreed-on development goals. The Declaration should condemn

Member States' use of selective and discriminatory policies that encourage unregulated migration and cause irregular flows that create problems for countries of transit and render migrants vulnerable to human-trafficking networks. In that regard, it should directly address the effects of the Cuban Adjustment Act of the United States, and in particular the implementation of the so-called wet-foot, dry-foot policy, which treats Cubans differently from anyone else in the world by admitting them immediately and automatically to the United States, regardless of the ways and means whereby they enter its territory and even if they are illegal. The policy encourages illegal emigration from Cuba to the United States and constitutes a violation of the letter and spirit of existing migration accords under which both countries have an obligation to ensure legal, safe and orderly migration.

Similarly, Cuba asserts that the Declaration should have asked for an end to the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program in the United States, which encourages Cuban doctors and other health workers to abandon their missions in third countries and to emigrate to the United States. It is a reprehensible practice designed to damage Cuban cooperation programmes and deprive Cuba and many other countries in need of vital human resources.

Ms. Mainali (Nepal): I would first like to congratulate the co-facilitators and all of us on a successful conclusion to the negotiations on the draft outcome document of the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants (resolution 70/302, annex). Nepal fully understands how important and urgent it is to deal effectively with the sensitive issues consequent on the situations that are at the root of large movements of refugees and migrants, and yet how difficult it is to find ways to do so. My delegation has followed the negotiations with great interest, since the issue is one that is central to Nepal as a host to one of the world's most protracted refugee problems and a country about one tenth of whose population is made up of migrant workers from outside the country. In the light of this, we really appreciate the efforts made by all delegations to arrive at consensus on the draft document. Nonetheless, my delegation wishes to register the following concerns.

Developing countries that host large numbers of refugees should be considered in the light of their capacity to do so and to make the commitments included in the draft outcome document. The commitments that are expected of such countries may not be feasible in practice. We also believe that nothing in the draft document should be construed as a binding alternative instrument for countries that are not party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Nor should it eliminate the autonomy and right to their own policies of individual States for decisions on such issues as their national capacity, economy, environmental consideration, geopolitical sensitivities and domestic imperatives demand.

The scale of resources required to address the problems that come with large movements of refugees and migrants is very high. If such resources are mobilized at the cost of providing development aid to least-developed countries (LDCs) and others in special situations, they may involuntarily risk increasing the numbers of migrants and refugees due to the direct effects on the economies and related political issues in these countries.

Refugees and migrants are not synonymous. They are distinct from one another and should be treated as such. We should always take into account the fact that not all migrants are refugees. Any provision that downplays that reality may make its implementation unrealistic, and no provisions should leave room for justification of any forceful eviction of citizens.

We agree that every possible effort should be made to ensure that all the basic rights of refugees and migrants are protected, but seeking such assurances from LDCs or vulnerable host countries whose own citizens are themselves far from possessing such rights is counter-productive and blames them for a lack of resources and capacity. We therefore believe that the specific national circumstances and conditions of countries such as Nepal should be taken into account and an enhanced level of international cooperation provided in order to bridge the resource gap.

When we draft outcome documents such as these, we should aim to reach a consensus that can stand the test of time, changing landscapes, shifting problems and likely scenarios that indicate that a country's status may change over time. Regarding issues relating to status, residency and nationality, we should be aware that the same country may simultaneously be a place of origin, destination or transit for different groups of migrants. There is no guarantee that a place of origin will not be a destination too, or vice versa. Our texts should reflect that perspective as well. Where refugee

and migrant populations are manmade, they should be the responsibility of the country that has been the cause, not the country where they reside. We respect the right of refugees to return to their own countries. In case of political refugees, the problem cannot be fully addressed if the countries of origin take a back seat.

Nepal is not yet a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its optional Protocol. Despite that, on humanitarian grounds, we have hosted refugees and provided them with all the necessary support and favourable environments within our capacity to do so. Nepal has always respected the principle of non-refoulement, while making every effort to protect and promote refugees' dignity and well-being. The international community should make every effort to avoid situations where those who reject refugees are silently encouraged while those who extend support to them on humanitarian grounds are burdened with additional commitments. Nor should those who wish to return to their countries in safety and dignity be forced to accept citizenship of their host countries or to resettle elsewhere.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote for this meeting.

We will now hear statements after the adoption of the resolution.

Ms. Amadeo (United States of America): The United States is pleased to join consensus on resolution 70/302 before us, which decides to transmit the draft outcome document of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants to the General Assembly at its seventy-first session for adoption at the high-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants, to be held on 19 September. In doing so, we reiterate the comments that we made at the adoption of the Declaration and its two annexes on 2 August. We will transmit a written explanation of the United States position on the text to the Secretary-General separately for inclusion in the official record under the relevant agenda item.

We also welcome the reinsertion of the name of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration and Development, Peter Sutherland, and note also that we have concerns about the number of substantive changes to the text.

Ms. Faizunnesa (Bangladesh): On behalf of the Bangladesh delegation, I would like to congratulate and thank you, Sir. I would also like to congratulate the co-facilitators, Ambassadors Dina Kawar and David Donoghue, for their leadership and also all Member States for their substantive engagement during the negotiations and the successful outcome. We express our sincere thanks to the co-facilitators for their attempts in upholding the consensus, which was achieved during the negotiations. We would also like to welcome the reinsertion of the name of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, a consensus reached during the negotiations.

Now we should look forward and work together for a successful high-level meeting on 19 September and the adoption of the New York Declaration, which will ultimately culminate in the adoption of the global compact for migrants and refugees through an inclusive intergovernmental process.

The President: We have now heard the last speaker on this item.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Ambassadors David Donoghue of Ireland and Dina Kawar of Jordan, the co-facillitators of the intergovernmental negotiations, who demonstrated great political acumen in their conduct of the complex discussion in the negotiations. I also thank all Member States for their valuable contributions to reaching an agreement on resolution 70/302.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 15 and agenda item 116?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 20 and 79 (*continued*)

Sustainable development

Oceans and the law of the sea

(a) Oceans and the law of the sea

Draft resolution (A/70/L.64)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/70/L.64, entitled "Modalities for the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Pollard (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): The present statement is made in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

In paragraphs 1 and 2 of draft resolution A/70/L.64, the General Assembly would decide that the high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, shall be convened at United Nations Headquarters from 5 to 9 June 2017, in view of the exceptional circumstances; and also decide that the Governments of Fiji and Sweden shall retain co-hosting responsibilities by assuming the costs of the conference and its preparatory process.

Pursuant to the request contained in paragraph 2, it is understood that the Governments of Fiji and Sweden would be responsible for co-hosting the high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, and would assume all the costs associated with the Conference and its preparatory Process.

Accordingly, the adoption of draft resolution A/70/L.64 would not give rise to any financial implications under the programme budget for the biennium of 2016-2017.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/70/L.64, entitled "Modalities for the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development". May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/70/L.64 was adopted (resolution 70/303).

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to delegations that wish to explain their position on the resolution just adopted, I remind Assembly members that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Medina Mejías (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We take this opportunity to express our unconditional solidarity with the people of our brother country Fiji, confronted by the natural disaster that recently impacted its shores. We trust that they will emerge stronger from their unfortunate circumstances.

Our delegation wishes to refer to resolution 70/303, which has just been adopted under agenda items 20 and 79 (a), entitled "Modalities for the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development". We wish to express our gratitude to the facilitators of the resolution — the representatives of the delegations of Fiji, Sweden and Mauritius. We also wish to express our thanks to the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, the Office of Legal Affairs and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

For the sake of consensus, my country took part in the negotiation process in a constructive and dialogue-oriented spirit. It is nevertheless appropriate to recall that Venezuela is not party to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Venezuela is also not a party to the Agreement on the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 related to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. That is why the regulations set out in the aforesaid instruments, including those that could be characterized as customary international law — other than those that our country expressly recognizes through their incorporation into our national legislation — cannot be imposed upon us. For Venezuela, the Convention on the Law of the Sea should not constitute the sole legal framework to regulate activities related to the oceans and seas, or characterized as a universal instrument.

While the text includes positive and proactive aspects on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), we nevertheless note the presence of elements that, in their times, led my country to express reservations on the outcome document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288, annex), as well as issues relating to marine biodiversity outside national jurisdictions. For the same reasons, my country has also expressed reservations on Sustainable Development Goal 14 (c), included in the

document, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

We are of the view that we must consider the future updating of the terms of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, since new situations that have been addressed prematurely and in some cases could have counterproductive results. We take this opportunity to stress that the evolution of this regime must address the most important seas and oceans issues of the day in a balanced, equitable, participatory and inclusive manner. In that context, we again offer our special thanks to the delegations of Fiji and Sweden on the work they have done in preparing for the Conference. They can count on the active participation and the full support of my country on this issue.

Mr. Daunivalu (Fiji): The Fiji delegation is delighted to see resolution 70/303 adopted by consensus, and we thank all Member States for demonstrating a positive spirit of engagement throughout the consultations. We especially thank the two co-facilitators, Ambassador Jagdish Koonjul, Permanent Representative of Mauritius, and Ambassador Magnus Lennartsson of Sweden for their excellent stewardship in bringing us all together through this resolution.

We also express our appreciation to President Lykketoft and his Office for the leadership and oversight theyprovided throughout this process. The adoption is a joyous mc nent not only for Fiji but for all communities around the world that care about the oceans' health. We are convinced that this will be the game-changing conference for the ocean — one that will support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, thereby helping to reverse the current cycle of decline in which the oceans are caught. To ensure that the Conference delivers on the mandate given by this organ, the Fiji delegation, along with that of Sweden, is committed to working closely with Member States, relevant international organizations and partners in preparing for it in June 2017.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

I would like to express my gratitude to Ambassador Jagdish Koonjul of Mauritius and Ambassador Magnus Lennartsson of Sweden, co-facilitators of resolution 70/303, for conducting the complex negotiations on the resolution in the informal consultations to bring them to a successful conclusion. I am sure that the members of the Assembly join me in extending to them our sincere appreciation.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 20 as a whole and agenda item 79 as a whole?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 34

Preventing armed conflict

(b) Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution

Draft resolution (A/70/L.65)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Finland to introduce draft resolution A/70/L.65.

Mr. Sauer (Finland): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/70/L.65, entitled "Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution". The draft was initiated by the Group of Friends of Mediation. The Group of Friends, co-chaired by Finland and Turkey, consists of 43 States Members of the United Nations and 8 regional and subregional organizations, with a total of 51 members. Before the draft I am presenting today, the Group initiated three resolutions on mediation. The first, in 2011 (resolution 65/283), addressed the normative framework of mediation. The second, in 2012 (resolution 66/291), was procedural. Resolution 68/303 of 2014 had a specific focus on the role of regional and subregional organizations in mediation.

Mediation is one of the principal tools for the peaceful settlement of disputes envisaged under the Charter of the United Nations. It is among the main raisons d'être of the Organization. Mediation, as we know, is a voluntary endeavour whereby a third party assists two or more parties, upon their consent, in preventing, managing or resolving a conflict by helping them to achieve mutually acceptable agreements. The United Nations has been at the forefront of international mediation efforts.

The new draft resolution seeks to strengthen the role of mediation in line with the key findings and recommendations of the recent review processes in United Nations peace and security, which have concluded that mediation should be further used as

a conflict-prevention tool and as a means to sustain peace. Mediation needs to be used to its full potential as a tool for seeking political solutions to conflict. At the United Nations, mediation needs to have a central place in the Organization's toolbox.

In line with the reviews and the 2014 resolution, today's draft resolution recognizes the role that regional and subregional organizations play in mediation. The institutional and operational partnerships between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations should continue and be further enhanced. In specific mediation contexts, the coherence and complementarity of the efforts of the various actors should be encouraged. Mediation efforts should also engage all the relevant actors and support national and local capacities, as appropriate. The draft resolution recognizes the role of civil society in mediation and calls for integrating gender perspectives into it.

In order to fully play its role, mediation needs capacities, funding, support functions and strategic thinking. Those aspects must be developed further to ensure a professional approach in every effort involving the United Nations, regional and subregional organizations and Member States.

Strengthening the role of mediation as a tool for conflict prevention should also be a priority for the incoming Secretary-General. The draft resolution includes a task directed specifically at the Secretary-General and requesting that he or she produce a report on mediation. It does not, however, focus on any specific conflict or mediation process.

We wish to thank all delegations for their active participation, constructive approach and flexibility in the negotiations, and for their untiring quest to find solutions. We would also like to thank the other delegations sponsoring today's draft resolution.

In conclusion, I would also like to acknowledge the Secretariat and its Mediation Support Unit for their support and insights during the process.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/70/L.65, entitled "Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution".

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Pollard (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, in addition to those delegations listed in document A/70/L.65, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Austria, Azerbaijan, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mexico, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay and the observer State of Palestine.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/70/L.65?

Draft resolution A/70/L.65 was adopted (resolution 70/304).

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted, I would like to remind delegations that explanations of are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by representatives from their seats.

Mr. Samvelian (Armenia): The role of mediation is essential to the prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts and is clearly recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, Article 33 of which explicitly calls on parties to a dispute to resort to mediation. Clearly, mediation can and should play a critical role at every stage of a conflict or dispute. That said, the resolution the Assembly has just adopted (resolution 70/304) should be based on a clearly articulated consensus supported by all States. Such consensus is central to ensuring the resolution's credibility and integrity.

Armenia deplores the fact that the resolution has retained an uncompromising position on certain areas through the selective references to the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations that are reflected in two of its preambular paragraphs. In considering delegations' arguments concerning the

application in the resolution of certain forms of agreed-on language, Armenia would like to point out that the Charter represents the ultimate agreed-on language. The purposes and principles of the Charter cannot be distorted, limited or made conditional. It is evident that credible and effective mediation aims to achieve the peaceful settlement of disputes and the prevention and resolution of conflicts in ways that are based on the Charter and on international law. Article 1 of the Charter emphasizes that the purpose of the Organization is to

> "develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace".

In the decades since the adoption of the Charter, our understanding of the substantive legal principle of self-determination has evolved into our recognition of it as a fundamental right. Today's resolution aims to further strengthen the mediation dimension of the United Nations and regional organizations. As such, we believe that it should consolidate the purposes of the Charter and the principles of international law and ensure their balanced and inclusive reflection in the text. We cannot agree to the limitations it imposes on the self-determination of peoples, and we believe that the narrow reference in the seventh preambular paragraph should in no way prejudice the right of all peoples to self-determination, freedom and independence, as derived from the Charter of the United Nations, the two international covenants on human rights and the numerous relevant United Nations resolutions, among other instruments, especially given the resolution's subject matter.

We firmly believe that a delegation has a legitimate right to request that a resolution duly reflect the language of the Charter of the United Nations and that such a request should be heard, respected and addressed. I regret that resolution 70/304 lacks that minimum degree of agreement, and Armenia therefore dissociates itself from the consensus.

Mr. Tsymbaliuk (Ukraine): I would like to underscore the special importance of the topic of resolution 70/304 for my country and to thank the representatives of Finland and Turkey for the efforts to facilitate its adoption.

As a country that continues to suffer from Russian aggression, we clearly understand the importance of mediation activities at all stages of the conflict cycle, from prevention to resolution. Ukraine is fully committed to the idea that the United Nations has to play a more active role in response to ongoing conflicts all over the world. Ukrainian society looks upon the United Nations as a universal international organization tasked with preventing military conflicts between States and ensuring compliance with the principles of international law. The relevance of this statement has increased significantly over the past two years with regard to the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine.

According to the Secretary-General's report on the United Nations and conflict prevention of 25 September 2015,

> "while Member States bear the primary responsibility for conflict prevention, the United Nations, with its universal membership, impartiality and the legitimacy derived from the principles of the Charter, has an important and unique role to play." (*S/2015/730, para. 2*)

Once again, we would like to express our gratitude for the support expressed by Member States with respect to the resolution on the territorial integrity of Ukraine. At the same time, we are of the view that there is room for actions by the Secretariat, within its competence in the area of mediation and good offices, instead of shying away from playing its part. Such an action does not contribute to resolving the conflict. The Russian Federation continues to concentrate its weaponry, armaments and military forces on the temporary occupied territories of Crimea and Dombass, as well as along the Ukrainian-Russian border. Nevertheless, Ukraine remains committed to a peaceful resolution of this conflict. We proceed from the fact that Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations envisages an obligation to settle any international dispute peacefully. However, striving to achieve that does not mean that a breach of the principles of the United Nations should be accepted. That would be a false lesson to be drawn from history and be detrimental for both regional and global security. In that context, Ukraine would like to highlight the necessity of strengthening the cooperation of the United Nations with regional and subregional organizations devoted to the process of mediation and conflict resolution.

In conclusion, I wish to recall that resolution 70/304, on the territorial integrity of Ukraine, was also adopted

under this agenda item. That resolution underlines the prescience of the Charter principles, including the obligations of States to refrain in their international relations from the threat of the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State and to settle international disputes by peaceful means, thereby emphasizing the acute relevance of mediation activities given the current state of world affairs.

Mr. Mazzeo (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Republic of Argentina joined the consensus on resolution 70/304, entitled "Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution". In doing so, Argentina reaffirms its strong commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations as well as its belief that multilateralism is the key principle for international peace and security. While all methods for the peaceful settlement of disputes are equally valid to settle international conflicts, we particularly stress our conviction that only through such methods can we ensure fair and lasting solutions. That of course means mediation, which, as stipulated in the guidelines of the United Nations for effective mediation, has its own logic and may or may not coexist with other methods for the peaceful settlement of disputes, such as facilitation, good offices and dialogue efforts. In that regard, we stress the special role that the Charter bestows on the Secretary-General in terms of good offices and mediation.

Argentina stresses that the guideliness for effective mediation refer to the necessary consent of the parties to be involved in a specific process for the peaceful settlement of disputes. Nevertheless, it is clear that what can never be subjected to the consent of the parties is the greater obligation that weighs upon all Member States to settle disputes by peaceful means. For that reason, it would not be appropriate to condition the consent of the parties to a dispute to the mandate given by the international community to the Secretary-General.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 34?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items: reports of the General Committee

The Acting President: Members will recall that, at its 95th plenary meeting, on 13 May 2016, the General Assembly concluded its consideration of sub-item (c) of agenda item 113. In order for the Assembly to consider sub-item (c) of agenda item 113, it will be necessary to reopen its consideration.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen its consideration of sub-item (c) of agenda item 113 and to proceed immediately to its consideration?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 113 (*continued*)

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(c) Election of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme

Note by the Secretary-General (A/70/859/Add.1)

The Acting President: Members will recall that, at its 95th plenary meeting, on 13 May 2016, the General Assembly elected Mr. Erik Solheim as Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme for a term of four years, beginning on 15 June 2016 and ending 14 June 2020. In his note, the Secretary-General informs the General Assembly that Mr. Solheim assumed his duties on 27 June 2016. Accordingly, his term of office will be from 27 June 2016 to 26 June 2020.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note that Mr. Solheim's term of office will be from 27 June 2016 to 26 June 2020?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (c) of agenda item 113 and of agenda item 113 as a whole?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 34 (*continued*)

Prevention of armed conflict

(a) Prevention of armed conflict

The Acting President: Member States will recall that, at its 2nd meeting, on 18 September 2015, the Assembly decided to include this sub-item in the agenda of the seventieth session. It is my understanding that it would be desirable to include this sub-item in the draft agenda of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to include sub-item (a) of agenda item 34 in the draft agenda of its seventy-first session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is also the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 34 and of agenda item 34 as a whole?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 36

Zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic

The Acting President: Member States will recall that, in resolution 55/285, the General decided to consider agenda item 36 biennially at its fifty-sixth session. Members will also recall that the Assembly, in its decision 60/509, decided to maintain biennial consideration of the item at its seventy-first session. Members will furthermore recall that the General Assembly, in its resolution 69/322, requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Assembly at its seventieth session and decided to include the item in the provisional agenda of the seventieth session. It is my understanding that to maintain the biennial consideration of the item, pursuant to decision 60/509, it would be desirable to include this item in the draft agenda of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to include agenda item 36 in the draft agenda of its seventy-first session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 36?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 40

The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan

The Acting President: Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 18 September 2015, the Assembly decided to include agenda item 40 in the agenda of the seventieth session. In connection with this item, I have received a letter dated 3 August 2016 from the representative of Azerbaijan in which he requests that the consideration of this agenda item be deferred to the Assembly's seventy-first session.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer its consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of its seventy-first session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I also take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 40?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 41

Question of the Comorian island of Mayotte

The Acting President: Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 18 September 2015, the Assembly decided to include this item in its agenda, on the understanding that there would be no consideration of the item by the Assembly until further notice. In connection with this item, I have received a note verbale dated 13 April 2016 from the Permanent Mission of the Comoros to the United Nations requesting the inclusion of this item in the provisional agenda of the seventy-first session.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to include the item entitled "Question of the Comorian island of Mayotte" in the draft agenda of the seventy-first session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 41?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 43

The situation in Central America: progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development

The Acting President: Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 18 September 2015, the Assembly decided to include item 43 in the agenda of the seventieth session in accordance with the decision 60/508, of 31 October 2005. In that decision, the General decided that this item shall remain on the agenda for consideration upon notification by Member States. Accordingly, this item has been included in the draft agenda of the seventy-first session.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 43?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 44 to 49

Question of Cyprus

Armed aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)

The situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti

Armed Israeli aggression against the Iraqi nuclear installations and its grave consequences for the established international system concerning the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and international peace and security

Consequences of the Iraqi occupation of and aggression against Kuwait

The Acting President: Members will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 18 September 2015, the Assembly decided to include items 44 to 49 in the agenda of the seventieth session, in accordance with paragraph 4 (b) of the annex to its resolution 58/316, of 1 July 2004. In resolution 58/316, the General Assembly decided that these items shall remain on the agenda for consideration upon notification by Member States. Accordingly, these items have been included in the draft agenda of the seventy-first session.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda items 44 to 49?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 119 (*continued*)

Implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations

The Acting President: Members will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 18 September 2015, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the seventieth session. Members will also recall that the Assembly considered, in a joint debate, agenda items 119 and 120 at its 45th and 46th plenary meetings, on 3 and 4 November 2015. It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the seventy-first session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this agenda item 119 and to include it in the draft agenda of its seventy-first session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I also take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 119?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 130 (*continued*)

Global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean Basin, with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers

The Acting President: Members will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 18 September 2015, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the seventieth session. Members will also recall that the Assembly considered this item at its 59th, 60th and 61st plenary meetings, on 20 and 23 November 2015.

Mr. Mounzer (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to record my country's objection to re-including agenda item 130, "Global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean Basin, with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers", for the following reasons.

First of all, the phenomenon of migration and refugees is a global phenomenon that is affecting all

peoples of the world, rather than a specific geographical region or population. The agenda item in question seeks to focus on the phenomenon in the Mediterranean Basin alone and only on the Syrian population. Therefore, the inclusion of these specific places and people betrays political rather than humanitarian motives. I would also highlight that Syrians make up only 20 per cent of the migratory movements from the Mediterranean via Turkey. The remainder comprises other nationalities in Turkey with fake Syrian passports.

Secondly, the phenomenon will be eliminated only if all Member States assert that countries that support terrorism must stop doing so and must implement the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Thirdly, while we express our appreciation of the frank and honest efforts of a number of countries to host Syrians, we reject any attempt to abuse these Syrians through political and electoral manipulations or to contend that they cannot be hosted or that they are linked to terrorism. The international community must therefore shoulder its own responsibilities to confront the phenomenon of tens of thousands of foreign terrorists from 100 Member States migrating to join the terrorist groups that are active in Syria.

We can solve the problem of Syrian refugees and encourage them to return to their countries only if we first end the terrorism that rules over the Syrian people and affects all aspects of life in Syria. That can be accomplished by pressuring the Governments of the countries that fund terrorism to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions relating to confronting terrorism, especially resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015).

Secondly, we must end the unilateral procedures and measures imposed on the Syrian people that are among the primary reasons behind the paralysis of their way of life, the destruction of their infrastructure, the closing of hundreds of factories and the increase in the unemployment rate. These unilateral measures are serving to limit the Syrians' way of life, extending the tragedies that have befallen them thus far and causing them to flee their country and fall victim to human traffickers.

Thirdly, we must support international efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis based on a comprehensive dialogue among the Syrian people, without external interference.

Fourthly, we must stop buying oil and antiquities from Da'esh and other Turkish mediators.

Fifthly, stressing that the agenda item is to be deferred to the following session makes it clear that the political blackmail of the Syrian Government will continue.

In conclusion, and because the issues of migrants and refugees are being discussed at two levels of the General Assembly, including the high-level meeting that is charged with dealing with large movements of migrants and refugees, my delegation would like to stress that agenda item 130 should not be included in the agenda of the seventy-first session.

Mr. Maleki (Islamic Republic of Iran): Since the issue of migrants and refugees is being regularly considered under various agenda items, bearing in mind the hefty number of items already on the General Assembly's agenda, and in order to avoid duplication in the Assembly's work, my delegation is also unable to support the inclusion of item 130 on the draft agenda of the seventy-first session.

Mr. Begeç (Turkey): In the light of the previous two delegations' statements, I feel obliged to take the floor. While I regret having to take up more of our time, I should point out that in the next few days our leaders will come together to raise global awareness of the tragedies facing millions of displaced people. The summit of 19 September will represent an important milestone in our efforts to take stock of our work and advance our areas of action in addressing large movements of refugees and migrants. Turkey is determined to continue its cooperation, advocacy and humanitarian policies aimed at ensuring safe, orderly and regulated migration, as well as spreading the burden and sharing responsibility for refugees and their hosts.

As we said during the adoption of the agenda of the seventy-first session, this subject has never been Turkey's agenda item per se. Since that adoption, it has been the General Assembly's item, and today it is still in our collective interest to consider the issue at the seventy-first session until we see meaningful change in the lives of millions of the displaced. We are therefore confident that Member States will stand firm in their commitment to keeping item 130 on the agenda of the seventy-first session of the Assembly.

Ms. Engelbrecht Schadtler (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to

briefly add our voice to the discussion. In the interests of saving time, we will not repeat the explanations just made by our colleagues from Syria and Iran, but while we are aware that the issue of refugees is a global problem, we do not support including the topic on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.

Ms. Blake (United States of America): The United States wishes to express its support for the transfer of agenda item 130. Despite the fact that refugees and migrants are included elsewhere in the General Assembly's scope of work, we believe there is still a place and a need for a specific focus on the issue, and wish to see it included on the agenda of the Assembly at its seventy-first session.

Ms. Guillamo (France) (*spoke in French*): France supports keeping item 130, "Global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin, with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers", on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.

Mr. Al-Hamadi (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): The introductory statement today by the President of the General Assembly reflected only a small part of the suffering and tragedy suffered by millions of refugees, especially refugees from Syria. My Turkish colleague has voiced the reasons that prompt us to support keeping the item on the Assembly's agenda as a forum and a way of dealing with the suffering of those millions. Just as we support the reasons cited by the representative of Turkey, we also support keeping the item on the Assembly's agenda.

Mr. McDonald (United Kingdom): I would like to reaffirm that the United Kingdom also supports keeping this item and transferring it to the agenda of the Assembly at its seventy-first session.

Ms. Radwan (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I too would like to express my delegation's support for keeping item 130 on the agenda of the Assembly at its next session.

Mr. Tsymbaliuk (Ukraine): I would like to support the proposal of the representative of Turkey to keep this item on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.

Mr. Nagan (Netherlands): I would like to add my voice to those proposing to retain this item on the Assembly's agenda, given the ongoing tragedy in the region and in Syria itself.

The Acting President: Having heard the statements just made, I understand that further consultation is required. I therefore propose that we defer discussion of this item to the morning of Tuesday, 13 September 2016. The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 130.

Agenda item 155

Financing of the United Nations Mission in East Timor

The Acting President: Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 18 September 2015, the Assembly decided to include this item on the agenda of the seventieth session. It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of the item to the seventy-first session. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of agenda item 155 and to include it on the draft agenda of the seventy-first session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 155?

It was so decided.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I should like to remind delegations that the following agenda items, which have been considered at previous meetings, remain open for consideration during the seventieth session of the General Assembly: items 9, 16, 18, 18 (d), 21, 30 to 32, 37, 38, 56, 57, 67, 73, 73 (a), 73 (b), 73 (c), 74, 91, 107, 109, 110, 112, 112 (b), 114, 114 (a), 114 (o), 114 (e), 114 (f), 114 (g), 115, 122, 123, 126 to 129, 131 to 154 and 156 to 166.

As members are aware, these items have been included in the provisional agenda of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, with the exception of sub-item (d) of agenda item 18, entitled "Commodities"; agenda item 32, entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies"; agenda item 74, entitled "Assistance to survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly orphans, widows and

victims of sexual violence"; agenda item 91, entitled "Review of the implementation of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security"; agenda item 126, entitled "International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January and 31 December 1994"; agenda item 133, entitled "Programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015"; agenda item 150, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad"; agenda item 156, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste"; and agenda item 163, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic".

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to include agenda items 9, 16, 18, 21, 30, 31, 37, 38, 56, 57, 67, 73, 73 (a), 73 (b), 73 (c), 107, 109, 110, 112, 112 (b), 114, 114 (a), 114 (b), 114 (e), 114 (f), 114 (g), 115, 122, 123, 127 to 129, 131, 132, 134 to 149, 151 to 154, 157 to 162, 164, 165 and 166 in the draft agenda of the seventy-first session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda items 9, 16, 18, 18 (d), 21, 30 to 32, 37, 38, 56, 57, 67, 73, 73 (a), 73 (b), 73 (c), 74, 91, 107, 109, 110, 112, 112 (b), 114, 114 (a), 114 (b), 114 (e), 114 (f), 114 (g), 115, 122, 123, 126 to 129, 131 to 154 and 156 to 166 at the present session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I should like to inform members that the following representatives have been elected Chairpersons of the First, Special Political and Decolonization (Fourth Committee), Second, Third and Sixth Committees of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session and are accordingly members of the General Committee for that session: for the First Committee, His Excellency Mr. Sabri Boukadoum of Algeria; for the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth), His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Drobnjak of Croatia; for the Second Committee, His Excellency Mr. Dian Triansyah Djani of Indonesia; for the Third Committee, Her Excellency Ms. María Emma Mejía Vélez of Colombia; and for the Sixth Committee, His Excellency Mr. Danny Danon of Israel.

I congratulate the Chairpersons of these Main Committees for the seventy-first session of the General Assembly on their election.

I should like to inform members that the Chairperson of the Fifth Committee will be elected at the first meeting of the Fifth Committee.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Upon the adoption of resolution 70/304, the Ukrainian delegation unfortunately took the floor for his own destructive ends rather than to focus on the Minsk agreements. We condemn such an approach.

The Acting President: I take this opportunity to remind members that the next plenary meeting of the seventieth session will be held on Thursday 13 September, in the morning, to take up agenda item 120, entitled "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", and agenda item 130, entitled "Global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin, with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers".

I would also like to remind members that the closing plenary meeting of the General Assembly at its seventieth session will be held at 3 p.m. on Tuesday, 13 September, in this Hall. Immediately thereafter, the General Assembly will declare open the seventy-first session and convene the 1st meeting of the seventy-first session.

In order to allow a smooth proceeding of two meetings — namely, the closing of the seventieth session and the opening of the seventy-first session — I would like to remind members that, as announced at the 115th plenary meeting and as indicated in the *Journal of the United Nations*, the General Assembly Hall will have the seating protocol of the seventy-first session as of 3 p.m. Therefore the delegation of the Plurinational State of Bolivia will occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

United Nations A/70/PV.117

General Assembly

Seventieth session

Official Records

117th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 13 September 2016, 11 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lykketoft ..... (Denmark)

The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Agenda item 120 (*continued*)

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly (A/70/1003)

Draft resolution (A/70/1003, paragraph 67)

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly considered agenda item 119 and agenda item 120 in a joint debate at its 45th plenary meeting, on 3 November 2015.

It is fitting that the last draft resolution to be considered by the General Assembly at this session is that related to the continued revitalization of the work of the Assembly. I congratulate members of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly on delivering yet another landmark draft resolution. In particular, allow me to extend my most sincere gratitude to Ambassador Vladimir Drobnjak of Croatia and Ambassador Wilfried Emvula of Namibia, co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group, who have so ably conducted the Working Group's discussions and complex negotiations.

The draft resolution contains a number of milestone reforms that will continue to reinvigorate the work of the General Assembly as we move into its eighth decade. It points to the critical need to continue to strengthen the role and authority of the General Assembly and to improve its working methods. During what has already been a momentous year for the process to appoint the next chief administrator of the Organization, the draft resolution continues to address the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General and other executive heads.

It is, however, in relation to the transparency and accountability of the President of the General Assembly and the Office of the President where this year's draft resolution makes its greatest mark. From the beginning of my term as President, I have placed the highest priority on this issue, particularly in terms of how I and members of my Office discharged our responsibilities.

It is with much gratitude to the Member States that I warmly welcome the steps this draft resolution proposes to strengthen the Office of the President. Most notably, it includes an oath of office which I know my successor looks forward to taking later today, and a code of conduct that will also apply to staff members of the Office. There are also a number of other measures in the draft resolution that, when taken together, form a substantive package of actions to strengthen the integrity of the Office of the President and, by extension, the integrity and legitimacy of the General Assembly and the United Nations itself. It includes mandated recordkeeping, financial disclosure requirements, the vetting of Trust Fund contributions and comprehensive induction briefings for the staff of the Office of the President.

This draft resolution is yet another example of effective, timely and decisive action on the part of the General Assembly. As my time as President very swiftly

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draws to a close, I am left with a sense of great optimism as to what we in the United Nations can achieve when we work together. In particular, I am optimistic about the fact that the General Assembly — the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations — continues to increase its capacity to effectively tackle today's many global challenges in the areas of peace, human rights and sustainable development.

We shall now proceed to consider the draft resolution contained in paragraph 67 of the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Abelian (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): The present statement is made in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. By adopting the draft resolution contained in paragraph 67 of the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly (A/70/1003), entitled "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", the General Assembly in paragraph 64 of the draft resolution would request the Secretary-General

> "to submit, in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019, proposals to review the budget allocation of the Office of the President of the General Assembly in accordance with existing procedures and bearing in mind the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General's Task Force on the functioning of the Office of the President of the General Assembly, and in this connection looks forward to considering such proposals during the main part of its seventy-second session".

The recommendations contained in paragraph 68 of the report of the Secretary-General's Task Force on the functioning of the Office of the President of the General Assembly state, in sub-paragraph (k), that

> "[t]he Secretary-General should consider proposing the establishment of an additional P-5 post in the Office, which could be filled for a duration of up to five years. The incumbent of the post would manage the continuity and transfer of knowledge between Presidents and sessions, as well as assist in the preparation of the President's end-of-presidency report and in the handover briefing recommended for the President and/or the Office".

In sub-paragraph (n), the report states that

> "[t]he Secretary-General should propose that programme budget resources be allocated for handover and overlap costs for a limited duration during the three-month transition period, in order to maximize the use of the transition period for incoming Presidents".

Should the General Assembly adopt the draft resolution contained in paragraph 67 of the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly, there would be programme budget implications for the biennium 2018-2019 as follows: $275,200 for the establishment of a P-5 post as recommended in document A/70/783, paragraph 68 (k), estimated using the vacancy factor of 50 per cent; and $178,800 in general temporary assistance corresponding to an overlap period of one month each year for four positions: two D-2s, one D-1 and one P-5 for handover and overlap requirements to assist outgoing and incoming Presidents of the General Assembly.

Accordingly, the adoption of the draft resolution contained in paragraph 67 of the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly would give rise to additional resource requirements amounting to approximately $454,000 for the biennium 2018-2019. These requirements would be dealt with within the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution entitled "Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly", contained in paragraph 67 of the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt it?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 70/305).

The President: We shall now hear statements after the adoption of the draft resolution.

I give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Van Den Akker (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States.

The European Union and its member States welcome today's adoption of resolution 70/305 on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. We would like to thank you, Sir, for convening today's meeting and for your engagement in the revitalization process. We owe further thanks to the co-Chairs, His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Drobnjak and His Excellency Mr. Wilfried Emvula, and their teams, who very ably led the negotiation process. Without their personal involvement, wisdom, good sense of humour and extraordinary patience, these results would not have been possible. We also thank the Secretariat, in particular Mr. Georg Zeiner, and other colleagues from the Secretariat engaged in the process for their useful involvement. We would like to highlight the constructive atmosphere that prevailed throughout the negotiations and thank all the negotiating partners for their engagement in revitalizing the General Assembly.

The resolution we have just adopted contains some significant new elements and would not have been possible without the flexibility shown by all Member States engaged in the negotiations. The resolution can be seen as another milestone in strengthening the accountability, transparency and institutional memory of the Office of the President. In particular, this includes the release of detailed information on the finances, official travel, staffing and activities of the Office of the President; a standardized format for the written hand-over summary of best practices and lessons learned, to be transmitted to the President's successor and made available to Member States; the preservation of records and institutional memory during the President's term in office by using existing recordkeeping and archiving facilities; new efforts to create equal opportunities for men and women and to ensure a gender balance throughout the United Nations system and in the Office of the President; and the obtaining of information on the sources of funding and staffing of the Office of the President. Another element worth highlighting is the agreement on the provision of financial disclosures on the assumption and completion of the President's duties, in line with the existing United Nations financial disclosure programme. In addition we agreed that all contributions have to be vetted through the United Nations Ethics Office and for non in-kind contributions to be channeled through the United Nations Trust Fund.

Particular progress was also made in other areas, such as the establishment of a code of ethics to be observed by the President, including the members of his or her Office, and of an individual oath of office to be taken by him or her. This is complemented by the decision to enhance cooperation and interaction between the Permanent Missions to the United Nations and the Secretariat through an interactive and comprehensive dialogue. All these, and other elements agreed upon in the resolution, will ensure a more favourable public image of the United Nations in general and the Office of the President.

On 18 July, the Council of the European Union adopted its priorities for the seventy-first session of the General Assembly. These priorities reaffirm the commitment of the European Union to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and recognize the need for the reform and reinvigoration of the global governance systems, of which the revitalization of the General Assembly is a key component. It is with this in mind that I wish to signal our readiness to remain constructively engaged in this process.

Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Ms. Lind (Estonia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) group, which is a cross-regional group comprised of the following 20 five small and mid-size countries seeking to improve the working methods of the Security Council: Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Gabon, Ghana, Hungary, Ireland, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Maldives, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Portugal, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and Uruguay.

We warmly welcome the adoption of resolution 70/305 today by consensus, and we would like to thank President Lykketoft for his leadership, as well as the tireless co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly, the Permanent Representatives of Croatia and Namibia, for their excellent work, creativity and continued dedication. We also extend warm thanks to all of the teams and the Secretariat.

The ACT group would like to offer a few comments on the cluster dealing with the selection and appointment of the next Secretary-General and other executive heads addressed in the resolution.

We are pleased that the Ad Hoc Working Group reached a consensual agreement to complement the historic resolution 69/321 with the provisions in this year's resolution, affirming the achievements made so far. We have received a clear overview of the candidates that were submitted for the position of the Secretary-General and pariticipated in informal dialgoues with them — a process that we believe will and should become the norm in the future. Since the new session will start today and the selection process is not only ongoing but reaching its final stage, we are glad that the resolution just adopted requests the President of the Assembly at its seventy-first session to actively support the process.

The ACT group continues to advocate for the best qualified person who will emerge from a fair and transparent selection process, to be appointed by the General Assembly as the next Secretary-General. We are therefore pleased that clear and precise qualifications and criteria have been included also in this year's resolution. Furthermore, in the highly debated paragraph 45, dealing with senior appointments, the long-standing positions of the ACT group are well reflected. We have been advocating for the Secretary-General to exercise independence in the selection of senior officials, as well as respect for the highest standards and efficiency in these appointments, while ensuring equal and fair distribution based on gender-balance and as wide of a geographical base as possible.

The ACT group would like to see the General Assembly continue playing the rightful role foreseen for it under the Charter, including its prerogative to draft a final resolution for the appointment of the Secretary-General. We hope that the final phase of the selection will be as encouraging as the whole process has been so far. In this regard, the ACT group, concurring with the views expressed by the President, calls once again upon the Security Council to live up to the expectations of the general membership concerning the new standard of openness and transparency on the selection process and the results of the straw polls.

In conclusion, allow me to sincerely thank President Lykketoft on behalf of our group for his excellent work in bringing new norms of transparency to the United Nations and to wish much success to the incoming President and, indeed, to the whole General Assembly for a sucessful conclusion to this selection process.

Mr. Sobral Duarte (Brazil): Brazil welcomes the adoption by consensus of another breakthrough resolution on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (resolution 70/305). We would like to thank Ambassador Vladimir Drobnjak of Croatia and Ambassador Wilfred Emvula of Namibia for their excellent work on a second consecutive year as co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly.

As is well known, last year's resolution 69/321 introduced important changes to the process of selecting and appointing the Secretary-General. These changes — in particular the holding of informal dialogues between the candidates and the General Assembly — have contributed so far to an unprecedented degree of transparency and democratic interaction in the process for the next Secretary-General. The resolution that was just adopted, after 10 months of intense discussions and negotiations, reflects a similar commitment to a more inclusive and democratic decision-making process at the United Nations.

From our perspective, the advances introduced in paragraphs 44 and 45 of this year's resolution deserve special mention. Paragraph 44, among other points, stresses that

> "the process of appointments to senior posts by the Secretary-General within the Organization should be inclusive and transparent".

Paragraph 45, for its part, stresses that as

> "a general rule, there should be no monopoly on senior posts in the United Nations system by nationals of any State or group of States".

Ironically, part of these breakthrough innovations — the prescription that there should be no monopolies in the senior posts of the Organization — came from previously agreed consensus language. Resolutions 46/232 of 1992 and 51/241 of 1997, both adopted without a vote, established this principle after the end of the Cold War. The importance of reaffirming this notion at this time should be highlighted. With the election of a new Secretary-General by the Assembly upon us, it is more than necessary that this principle should guide his or her appointments from the very outset. Improving the functioning of the Secretariat is a vital part of the reform and revitalization of the General Assembly and

of the United Nations as a whole, and there is no better moment to recommit to this idea than now.

This year's resolution also brings important innovations in other areas, especially regarding the President and his or her Office. After 70 years, a long overdue code of ethics has been established, as has an oath of office for the President. In addition, measures such as the provision of financial disclosures by the Presidents of the General Assembly, vetting all contributions to the Trust Fund in support of the Office of the President by the United Nations Ethics Office, as well as making available resources to the Presidents from their date of election, will contribute to the observance of the highest standards of transparency and ethics and will represent a positive contribution to fortify the activity of the Office of the President.

On other possible ways to improve and strengthen the work of the President of the General Assembly, however, the resolution has fallen short of expectations, especially as regards the long-overdue need to provide the Office with meaningful resources from the regular budget. Brazil remains committed to the revitalization of the General Assembly and the reaffirmation of its central role as the most democratic and representative decision-making body of the Organization, as well as to ensuring a more active role for the General Assembly in nominating the Secretary-General, in accordance with article 97 of the Charter of the United Nations. The General Assembly cannot be a rubber-stamping Assembly.

Finally, as this is the last resolution to be adopted during this session, allow me to congratulate the President on the excellent work he has done as the President of the General Assembly at its seventieth session. Among the many important initiatives the President has conducted during his term of office, let me single out his active participation in guaranteeing a democratic selection of the next Secretary-General by organizing the informal dialogues or hearings, as well as the creative town-hall meeting with the candidates that was covered by the TV network Al Jazeera. Absent his commitment, we may not have come this far.

Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the co-facilitators, Ambassador Vladimir Drobjnak and Ambassador Wilfried Emvula, for their tireless work, and President Lykketoft for his enormous efforts to reach the point where we find ourselves today. As we did last year in this same forum, this year I wish, on behalf of my delegation and my country, to extend our gratitude to President Lykketoft for the way he has, throughout these intense 10 months of negotiations, steered this ship of ours safely to port towards the revitalization the work of the General Assembly.

For a number of years, criticism has abounded at the lack of consensus within the Organization and the lack of concrete action taken to adapt it to the global challenges of an increasingly turbulent world. We have come a long way, but it has become ever more clear that, working together as the international community of States Members of the United Nations, we have achieved fruitful results with a view to making its principal organ more inclusive, more democratic and more transparent. I would highlight three key aspects

First, thanks to resolution 70/305, adopted today, we now have a more inclusive General Assembly. The resolution highlights the need for the United Nations to strike a gender and geographical balance. Let me be frank in saying that this is no mean feat, particularly in light of resolution 69/321 of 2015, wheb we were able to achieve a high participation of female candidates for the post of Secretary-General.

Secondly, thanks to resolution 70/305, we now have a more democratic General Assembly. Between us, we have managed to fine-tune the procedures established between the Assembly and the other organs — including the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the different components of the United Nations system — so that the sum of its parts can function more efficiently. I want to draw particular attention to the appeal made in the resolution for more consistent alignment between the General Assembly and the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), which perhaps constitutes the most significant achievement of our times in the area of development.

Thirdly, through this resolution, we have managed to create not just a more transparent General Assembly, but a much more transparent Organization, with the adoption of the code of ethics and the oath of office of the President of the General Assembly so that the President's actions are more visible for the rest of the world.

As ever, it is clear that there is still a long way to go, but to that end the momentum created by the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly offers the optimal space for

pursuing the right path. Strengthening the United Nations is essential to the ambitious agenda that we have proposed. It must evolve from being a mere aspiration to becoming a reality in the next 15 years. The orderly, transparent and efficient work of the General Assembly is essential to that end.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): On behalf of my dear friend, Ambassador Wilfried Emvula of Namibia and myself, I wish to express our sincere appreciation for all the constructive cooperation and creative assistance that we have received from Member States in the previous months. It has been a privilege to continue co-chairing the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly at the seventieth session as well, and we can most certainly say that resolution 70/305, which we have just adopted, is truly our common success.

The resolution before us is not only an important step forward in increasing the efficiency, transparency and accountability of the General Assembly and the Office of its President; it is also a triumph of consensus. It serves as the best example of what we all can achieve when we work together in the spirit of seeking a common goal and creative compromise. It is also, in more ways than one, a continuation of the milestone resolution 69/321.

There is still ample room for improvement within the framework of the revitalization of the General Assembly, but with the adoption of today's resolution, building on resolution 69/321, one can say with confidence that profound creative improvements have been accomplished, especially in the field of the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General and the strengthening the Office of the President. The fact that the annexes to the resolution will be immediately annexed to the rules of procedure of the General Assembly speaks for itself about the significance and reach of our action.

We want to thank the Secretariat, and in particular Mr. Georg Zeiner, for their highly professional, competent and valuable assistance and resourcefulness.

Last, but definitely not least, we thank the President of Assembly at its seventieth session, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, and his team for all the confidence entrusted in the co-Chairs and the efficient support provided whenever and wherever needed in the course of this challenging endeavour.

In a few hours, the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session will take the oath of office, thereby beginning the implementation of what we have achieved through our hard work and adopted today. We are confident that other important provisions of this far-reaching document will also be put to practical use very soon. It was indeed an honour to co-chair this groundbreaking process. We thank everyone once again.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly has thus completed its consideration of agenda item 120.

Agenda item 130 (*continued*)

Global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin, with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers

The Acting President: Members will recall that, at the Assembly's 116th plenary meeting, on 9 September, delegations expressed their views in favour of as well as against the inclusion of this item on the draft agenda of the Assembly's seventy-first session.

Mr. Mounzer (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): This issue is of interest to every State, whether it be one of destination or origin. This global phenomenon must be tackled by all of us, and all of us must work to find ways to solve it. We must be objective in examining every one of its aspects and effects all over the world, as well as its chief causes in the Middle East, particularly terrorism, the continuing Israeli occupation of Arab territories and the military invasion of some parts of the region, as well as unilateral economic sanctions.

Agenda item 130 focuses only on the area of the Mediterranean basin and Syrians in particular, ignoring the tragedies of Yemeni, Libyan and Afghan refugees. Many States Members of our Organization have interfered militarily in their countries. Based on data from Eurostat, the numbers of Syrian refugees and migrants do not exceed 20 per cent of asylum seekers, meaning that 80 per cent of those entering Europe are of other Asian or African origin. No one is willing to admit to the political and non-humanitarian motives behind the insistence on focusing on Syrian asylum seekers in this agenda item.

While we appreciate the sincere efforts of some States to host Syrian asylum seekers, we object to

their being used as a political ploy and to efforts to link them to terrorism. The international community should shoulder its responsibilities for dealing with the migration of the tens of thousands of foreign mercenary fighters travelling to join the terrorist groups active in Syria. In Syria, we are saddened by the flight of any Syrian seeking asylum, and we hope that all our citizens will eventually return to their schools, universities, villages and cities and will work side by side with their compatriots to rebuild Syria once more.

The existence of asylum seekers makes it incumbent on the international community to put pressure on States that support terrorism to end that support forthwith, and on States that have imposed unilateral economic sanctions on Syria — causing economic paralysis and the destruction of infrastructure — to lift those sanctions. A peaceful solution to the Syrian conflict requires an end to external interference. Based on Article 14 of the Charter of the United Nations, we therefore urge that item 130 either not be included on the agenda of the Assembly at its seventy-first session or that the emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers be deleted.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We believe that the General Assembly's consideration of the problem of irregular migration in the Mediterranean region should be broad and inclusive, taking into account every attendant aspect, including that of human rights, as well as of countries of origin, transit and destination. To highlight the Syrian factor in this issue seems inappropriate and politicized, particularly since we are all aware that the scale of migrants flowing through Libya and the Mediterranean basin near is now so threatening that it required special Security Council resolutions and a report of the Secretary-General (A/70/59), whose conclusions are not encouraging. As we know, it is precisely in the southern Mediterranean that the European Union has launched a special military operation, Operation Sophia. We therefore propose that the reference to Syrian asylum seekers be deleted from item 130, which would allow us to avoid unnecessary division within the General Assembly.

Mr. Louis (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of my delegation, I would first like to warmly congratulate the President on the leadership he has shown in steering the work of the General Assembly at its seventieth session, which is closing today.

I would like to focus the attention of the Assembly on the scale of the tragedy of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin. This is one of the most pressing humanitarian situations facing the world today, which has been getting exponentially worse for more than a year. Furthermore, aware of the urgency of the situation, at a General Assembly meeting held on 20 November 2015, the President of the Assembly was already delivering a message of alarm, stating that

> "[s]ince January, more than 880,000 refugees and migrants have arrived in Europe ... more than 3,500 of them have already died on the route this year". (*A/70/PV.59, p. 1*)

The plight of millions of displaced men, women and children refugees, Syrian or otherwise, must appeal to the conscience of the international community. In that regard, the collective action of the international community is necessary, and indeed indispensable, especially given the timely high-level summit on the large movements of refugees and migrants, to be held 19 September on the margins of the seventy-first regular session of the General Assembly.

The delegation of Haiti is very sensitive to and concerned by the situation of the massive displacement of refugees and migrants, particularly Syrian asylum seekers in the Mediterranean Basin, but also all displaced persons in general. Therefore, we are in favour of including agenda item 130, aptly named "Global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin, with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers", in the agenda of the seventy-first regular session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Begeç (Turkey): I would like to underline my delegation's strong position in favour of retaining item 130 on the agenda of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, as it is. We find it deeply regrettable that the merely procedural deferral of this agenda item is being challenged. The magnitude of the large-scale movement of the migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean basin needs no further explanation. The number of Syrian refugees, 4.8 million people in total, spreading out from Brazil to Australia, speaks for itself. At a time when we feel disheartened to see so many displaced trying to survive, we should not question the relevance of the United Nations addressing the tragedy.

Next week, our leaders will come together to address the issue of migrants and refugees in New York.

In the wake of these gatherings, we must refrain from being divided on an issue on which we should be most united. We are confident that Member States will stand firm in their commitments towards those who would look to the United Nations for assistance and support by retaining item 130 in the agenda of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly as it is.

Ms. Velichko (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The problem of refugees and migrants is of a global nature and should be considered holistically. On 19 September, the General Assembly will hold the high-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants. That event will be substantively unlike any other event held thus far in the United Nations on that theme. We will adopt a global strategy for refugees and a road map for migrants through outcome documents. There is also a subsequent plan to hold an international conference on migrants in order to adopt a global strategy on that issue.

These events reflect the fact that, in the short and mid terms, we have created a solid foundation for the profound and comprehensive consideration and exploration of ways to solve problems related to migrants and refugees, including Syrians. In that respect, we do not think it appropriate to include item 130 in the agenda of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly. A separate agenda item on that topic could lead to the duplication of work in the Assembly, expanding our already hefty agenda, and resulting in the irrational spending of the United Nations budget.

Mr. Chu Guang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China has listened to the statements made by the representatives of Belarus and the Russian Federation, and we thank them for their positions. We support the statement made by the representative of the Russian Federation. We believe that the second part of agenda item 130, "with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers", should be deleted.

Ms. Pritchard (Canada): There are many situations that warrant the attention of the General Assembly. However, the wide range of situations that are before us should not lead us to ignore the issue surrounding global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin, with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers.

Several delegations have already pointed out that it remains an issue of not only regional but also global concern, and it is our view that to remove that item from the agenda of the General Assembly at this time would send entirely the wrong message. It is for that reason that we support the inclusion of that item and would like to see it on the agenda of the seventy-first session.

Mr. Dibaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Islamic Republic of Iran underlines the importance of addressing the agony and suffering of refugees in a humane and respectful manner. In fact, Iran is no stranger to the issue at hand, as for several decades, it has single-handedly hosted one of the largest refugee populations in the world. However, singling out one situation among many does not seem helpful in addressing the subject. We reiterate our understanding that the issue of refugees should be considered in a holistic manner, under a relevant General Assembly agenda item, without undertaking a selective approach. It is for that reason that my delegation cannot support the inclusion of that agenda item in the draft agenda of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Poveda Brito (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, aware of the importance of considering a topic of such critical importance to the current global and humanitarian agenda as the tragedy of the refugees and migrants in the Mediterranean basin, asserts that it deserves a comprehensive treatment encompassing all geographical areas that suffer from that phenomenon, without focusing on any single region or country.

As such, our position on the issue will continue to advance a vision from the South that advocates the ongoing creation of a positive narrative on the topic of refugees and migrants and does not criminalize them by considering them to be the root causes of phenomena such as fomenting armed conflicts, but rather promotes economic and social development and overcoming poverty as structural mechanisms for addressing that global issue. We therefore support the Russian Federation's proposal.

Ms. Al-Temimi (Qatar): We want to echo the statement just made by our colleague from Turkey. This issue continues to be one of great global concern. That is why we support the inclusion of agenda item 130 in the agenda of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Barro (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Given the continuous flow of migrants through the Mediterranean Basin, Senegal is in favour of the inclusion of agenda

item 130 in the agenda of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly.

Ms. Blake (United States of America): The United States wishes to express its full support for retaining agenda item 130 as it is currently on the agenda of the General Assembly and for including it in the draft agenda of its seventy-first session. As several other delegations have stated, including Haiti's, that remains, as ever, a relevant challenge. We would strongly encourage all Member States to consider its relevancy, given the gravity of the situation of the displaced, not only in Syria but elsewhere, so as to ensure that we have an opportunity as an organ to continue discussing something that remains a timely and important matter.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): My country is, and has been for years, one of the countries at the forefront in the migrant and refugee crisis that affects the Mediterranean region. Of course, while war is a dimension of issues pertaining to migrants and refugees, we can speak particularly about what is happening in the Mediterranean. Taking into account that we are approaching the important Summit to be held on 19 September, we think that it would send the wrong message not to include this item in the draft agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. We therefore firmly support its inclusion.

Mr. Oussihamou (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): My delegation firmly supports the inclusion of agenda item 130 in the draft agenda of the upcoming session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Minami (Japan): Japan would like to support the proposal regarding the retention of agenda item 130, entitled "Global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin, with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers", in the draft agenda of the General Assembly of its seventy-first session.

The international community still faces human tragedies as a consequence of massive irregular movements of refugees and migrants in the Mediterranean basin. Given the complexity and seriousness of its root causes, this issue requires continuous global attention. Therefore, we need to discuss it intensively, before and after the Summit to be held on 19 September.

Ms. Duncan Villalobos (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica calls for retaining this item of the agenda. We believe that discussions must continue to be held in this forum.

Mr. Fornell (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Ecuador calls for item on refugees and migrants to be included in the draft agenda of the General Assembly, without politicization, double standards or singling out a specific country. Ecuador therefore supports including the item on the draft agenda, but without the reference to Syria.

Mr. Orozco Barrera (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation believes that it is important to retain this item as it stands on the draft agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session: "Global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin, with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers".

Mr. Cepero Aguilar (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): More than 1 million asylum seekers crossed the Mediterranean in 2015. According to the International Organization for Migration, 32 per cent of migrants who reportedly died or went missing in their attempt to reach Europe via the Mediterranean came from Western, Central and Southern Africa; 22 per cent from the Middle East and South Asia; 10 per cent from the Horn of Africa; 1 per cent from North Africa; and 35 per cent from areas unknown. Those statistics show that the use of the Mediterranean as a passageway to reach Europe is not exclusive to any particular country. The singling out of any one country with regard to this item will only contribute to an unrealistic analysis of the phenomenon in general.

In conclusion, Cuba supports the proposal made by the Russian delegation.

Mr. Mounzer (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The opinions expressed by the delegations of certain countries, including their insistence on dealing with the tragedy of migrants and refugees with a specific focus on Syrians alone and their rejection of the proposal made by the Russian Federation to retain that part of item 130, which focuses on a global awareness of the tragedy of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin while deleting the phrase specifically focusing on Syrian asylum seekers, demonstrate that there are Governments involved in this crisis and in exploiting the suffering of migrants and refugees in order to pressure the Syrian Government by exacerbating the humanitarian situation in Syria.

My delegation would therefore like the matter concerning agenda item 130 put to a recorded vote.

Ms. Danish (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia would like to retain item 130 in the draft agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session in connection with the huge movements of migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean basin and encourage all members to support retaining this item.

The Acting President: Members will recall that, at its 116th plenary meeting, on 9 September, delegations expressed their views in favour as well as against the inclusion of this item in the draft agenda of the seventy-first session.

In view of the objections made, the General Assembly will now proceed to a recorded vote on the proposal that agenda item 130 be included in the draft agenda of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belgium, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Central African Republic, Chile, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Haiti, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kiribati, Kuwait, Latvia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay

Against:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Iran (Islamic Republic of), Lesotho, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Bangladesh, Belarus, Brunei Darussalam, China, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Namibia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Viet Nam

The General Assembly decided to include agenda item 130 in the draft of agenda of its seventy-first session by 82 votes to 9, with 21 abstentions.

[Subsequently, the delegation of Albania informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour, the delegation of Cuba informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote against, and the delegation of Tanzania informed the Secretariat that it had intended to abstain.]

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Mounzer (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We welcome all the sincere and dedicated efforts to address the issue of Syrian refugees. However, including the item as it is, focusing on global awareness of the tragedies of only the Syrian refugees in the Mediterranean Basin, who represent only 20 per cent of all asylum seekers in Europe, we believe that there are doubts about the appropriateness of including this item on the draft agenda. Therefore, we requested a vote and voted against the inclusion of this item on the draft agenda. On this occasion, I should like to express our delegation's appreciation to those countries that voted for the inclusion of this item because of the global nature of this phenomenon and whose thinking was not confined to the Syrian phenomenon.

Mr. Gafoor (Singapore): Singapore voted in favour of including this item on the General Assembly's agenda, as we respect the right of delegations to propose agenda items for inclusion for discussion in the plenary. Furthermore, we see merit in retaining this agenda item for further discussion in the Assembly at its seventy-first session. The issue of irregular migration in the Mediterranean basin remains an issue of concern to the international community, as it affects many innocent people, including children. While our approaches to addressing large movements of migrants and refugees may differ, reflecting our differing national realities,

capabilities, policies and priorities, the General Assembly is the forum for Member States to discuss this key issue with a view to finding durable solutions to this challenge.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 130?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.

United Nations A/70/PV.118

General Assembly
Seventieth session

Official Records

118th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 13 September 2016, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lykketoft ..... (Denmark)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Statement by the Secretary-General

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: Today we bring down the gavel on a productive session of the General Assembly. I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your skilled leadership. Had this session adopted only the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), that would have been notable enough. But Member States achieved much more than that. Members reached an early agreement on the draft outcome (resolution 70/302, annex) of the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants that will be held this coming Monday. This must now lead to greater compassion, solidarity and a global sharing of responsibility.

At a time of appalling attacks in so many places, members reviewed the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The Assembly also held a much-needed special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem. That outcome document (resolution S-30/1) gives us a rights-based approach that stresses prevention, treatment, robust criminal justice and law-enforcement actions. And members held a series of very useful thematic debates on human rights, peace and security and the plight of children and youth affected by violent extremism.

The Assembly also took important steps to strengthen transparency in the work of the Office of the President of the General Assembly. That is in keeping with our wide-ranging efforts to make the Organization more accountable to the world's people. One of the most notable innovations of the seventieth session concerns my Office, that is, the choice of my successor. The Assembly has set in motion a process that is shining greater light onto what has been a largely opaque process. Informal dialogues with candidates have helped Member States get a good sense of their visions and views, and have enabled the world's people to feel more involved in the process — as they should be. Whatever happens in the weeks ahead, this newly opened process has set a new standard from which there should be no retreat.

Finally, Mr. President, on a more personal level, let me say that I have greatly appreciated working with you on so many challenges.

I congratulate all Member States and our many partners on a solid record of achievement. The seventy-first session will build on these gains as we continue striving to resolve conflict, protect human rights and advance prosperity for all on a healthy planet.

I thank you, Mr. President, for your leadership and I wish you continued success in the future.

Statement by the President

The President: A year ago in this Hall (see A/69/PV.1), I outlined how I hoped we could galvanize a new commitment to action and instal a spirit of transparency and openness in our work. I believe that

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we have made considerable progress, and yet so much more needs to be done.

We kicked off the largest summit in United Nations history by adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). In a world of poverty, climate change, conflict and forced displacement, with impunity for rights violations and huge gender and social inequality, the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), together with the historic Paris climate agreement, has outlined the routes for the evolutionary tranformation of our whole pattern of production and consumption. This is not only possible, but we also really have no choice in the matter. If we are to avoid future division and destruction — a crisis on a scale far greater than any known to humankind today — then the relentless and integrated implementation of the SDGs and climate action is an absolute necessity.

My first high-level thematic debate focused precisely on the plans, actions, finance, technology and partnerships needed for this. We managed, after much discussion, to place the 2030 Agenda follow-up and review framework on a more solid footing. Members are now in a good position to consider how best to align the Agenda for the General Assembly in light of the SDGs.

The Assembly also dealt with a list of important issues in relation to the SDGs. The 10-year review of the World Summit on the Information Society showed how explosive technological development presents both incredible opportunities and incredible challenges. The special session on the world drug problem saw strong support for a response rooted in human rights and in the advancement of public health. The meeting on the global battle against HIV/AIDS recommitted us to ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030. We also saw a recommitment to the implementation of support for the least-developed countries at the midterm review of the Istanbul Programme of Action in Antalya. Preparations got well under way for next years conference on how better to protect our oceans and marine biodiversity.

In just over a week's time, world leaders will address the most recent movements of refugees and migrants, in order to recommit to their international obligations and build on the achievements of the Secretary-General's World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul. However, it is obvious that achieving the 2030 Agenda will also demand a reverse of trends in maintaining peace and security and respect for human rights.

The deterioration in protecting human rights is observed in many countries as we mark the tenth anniversary of the Human Rights Council. In my high-level thematic debate in July, we focused on how that deterioration affects issues of non-discrimination, the rule of law and civil society space.

The General Assembly has also held meetings on the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. We discussed the Secretary-General's Human Rights Up Front initiative and the responsibility to protect. All the while, dangerous conflicts are ongoing and expanding in size and number, causing enormous humanitarian catastrophes. Disarmament negotiations have only disclosed long-standing divides and both military budgets and tensions among major countries have unfortunately increased. The General Assembly discussed the three major United Nations values on peacebuilding and peace operations and on women and peace and security, as well as the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, and we undertook a 10-year review on United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The overarching focus of discussions in the high-level thematic debate I organized in May and in the debate following the briefing by the Secretary-General was on the urgent need for real change both in Member States' approaches and in the number of troops available to the United Nations. Peacekeeping must be evaluated and there must naturally be zero-tolerence for any sexual exploitation or abuse by United Nations peacekeepers. Moreover, in the Fifth Committee, agreement is needed to provide better funding for mediation, prevention and peacebuilding, in order to reduce the number of conflicts and costly peacekeeping operations in the future.

According to the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council is supposed to be the guardian of global peace and security, but in too many serious conflicts there has been no consensus and no action. We need major and minor Powers to recreate what led us to the SDGs, the climate agreement and the negotiated outcome on the Iranian nuclear programme, instead of new war or proliferation. We need to understand that by implementing the Security Council's road map for peace in Syria and the ceasefire agreed over the weekend, in the global fight against terrorism, and in the need to stop arms and reinvigorate disarmament negotiations, we have existential common interests that are much more important than our conflicts of interest.

We need Security Council reform that can contribute to this common understanding. Discussion about this reform has been ongoing for over two decades, with only minimal progress made. The work this year, facilitated by Ambassador Lucas of Luxembourg and building on last year's text and annex, points to the common understanding that we need at least an enlarged Security Council that better reflects the geopolitical realities of the twentieth century. But if the General Assembly is serious about reform, all key players, including the five permanent members of the Security Council, have to change the script and be willing to compromise.

Reforms are important, but within a few weeks there will also be the extremely important selection of the new Secretary-General. I am very proud that we broke new ground with unique transparency in the selection process. The two-hour presentation of each of the candidates in the General Assembly dialogues and their collective global town hall in this Hall were important highlights and helped to include the global public in the debate about the future of the United Nations. I hope that transparency proves instrumental in identifying the best possible new Secretary-General over the coming months. I also appeal to the Security Council to make the remaining process open and engaging to preserve the legitimacy of its recommendation as it feeds into the Assembly's final decision.

This morning, I sent a letter to the Council summarizing the process to date and setting out some of the lessons we have learned so far. That letter also addresses the call of a large number of members for the appointment of co-facilitators to prepare an appointment draft resolution during the next session. In my view, such a call is consistent with the spirit of transparency and inclusivity with which the process has been imbued to date. At the same time, as we move towards the final decision, we must focus on forging consensus and ensuring that the next Secretary-General will receive both the full support of the membership and adequate preparation time before taking office.

Transparency and openness, however, must go far beyond the Secretary-General selection process. Throughout this session, I have sought to instil greater transparency in everything we do, and I am delighted to see that many of the steps I have advanced relating to the integrity, transparency and accountability of my own Office have now been codified in resolution 70/305, on the revitalization of the General Assembly, adopted earlier this morning, and I look forward to witnessing the first-ever taking of an oath of office by the incoming President in just a few moments.

But we also face deadlocks on the issue of civil society participation in United Nations meetings. The HIV/AIDS meeting from 8 to 10 June was particularly overshadowed by objections to the participation of non-governmental organizations that focus on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues. It is time to find sustainable and reasonable solutions. More broadly, we must also work to consistently improve the effectiveness of the General Assembly. There are, for example, outstanding challenges in the Fifth Committee. While we managed to reach agreement on the budget in time, far too much rigidity remains in the Organization and budgeting, and in Member States' positions. Similarly, on a number of occasions, agreement in negotiations was held up by one or two delegations alone, which in itself undermines the collective power of the Assembly. In addition, it is clear that the workload on delegations, on the Office of the President of the General Assembly and on relevant parts of the Secretariat is growing year on year, and it is critical that we focus our efforts on those areas where we can add the most value.

Before concluding, allow me to extend my gratitude to all who contributed to the results of this session. First of all, it has been an honour and a pleasure to work closely and amicably with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his team. We must all especially congratulate him on the successful outcome of his years of hard and tireless work for climate action. I wish him the very best for both the remainder of his term and for his future endeavours.

I wish to thank the membership for its commitment, cooperation and friendship during this session. In particular, I wish to thank each of the Permanent Representatives who played a prominent role in bringing various processes forward; the Vice-Presidents and the various facilitators and chairs of the regional groups; as well as the President of the Economic and Social Council and the Presidents of the Security Council, with whom I have enjoyed close collaboration.

I also wish to thank colleagues across the Secretariat, especially Ms. Catherine Pollard and her team in the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, who have been of immense assistance to me and my Office. Similarly, I wish to

thank all those who contributed to my Office either through financial support or secondments, or both.

Not least, I wish to thank each and every one of my own team who have been so professional, enthusiastic and innovative throughout the year. Special thanks also go to the officials in the Foreign Ministry, including the Permanent Representative of Denmark, and to the Government that asked me to come forward as candidate. I hope I have brought good Danish values and attitudes — directness included — to this year's presidency.

It has been a great honour to be President of the General Assembly. I encourage members to continue to make this organ more relevant, more outward-looking, more transparent and, of course, more effective. In His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, the Assembly will have an excellent President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session who is committed to doing just that, and to giving a universal push to the Sustainable Development Goals. I thank everyone for their attention and cooperation.

We are now coming to the end of the seventieth session of the General Assembly. I invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The President: I now invite His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, President-elect of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session, to make a statement and, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/305, of 13 September 2016, to take an oath of office.

The President-elect: Prior to assuming the high office of the presidency and taking the solemn oath of office, I have a few remarks to make before parting with my status as President-elect.

First, on behalf of all who are gathered here today, it is my duty and privilege this afternoon to thank the President of the General Assembly at its seventieth session for his selfless service to the United Nations throughout the past year. President Lykketoft brought new levels of transparency and openness to the United Nations, and there are few who do not see the many benefits derived. In that regard, one need think only of his clear, firm leadership of the General Assembly's comprehensive interaction with the candidates aspiring to the fill the post of the next Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Transparency calls for the exercise of our most worthy qualities of honesty, equity and ethical behaviour. Under its wide purview, we are required to hold ourselves to accountable to the highest standards expected of us as the selected representatives of humankind congregated here at the United Nations. The Lykketoft legacy is therefore a demanding one, but I am confident it will be an enduring one, and I for one will commit to building it over the coming session.

On behalf of my colleagues here present, I say to President Lykketoft that his was a job well done. His was a mantle well worn, and he should leave the Hall today in the full knowledge of our appreciation. I ask my colleagues to stand with me and express that thanks by acclamation.

The members of the General Assembly expressed their thanks to President Lykketoft by acclamation.

The President-elect: Next, I wish to express thanks to the Secretary-General for the continuation of his great service to the world. In the seventieth session, the Secretary-General's commitment to the creation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) achieved glorious fruition. His relentless pursuit of a breakthrough on climate change was rewarded in Paris. We are blessed with another four months of his leadership, so today is not the time for valedictory praise, but it is a reminder that we must seize the months ahead to garner from him all the broad wisdom and venerable experience he can pass on to us this year. I very much look forward to working closely with the Secretary-General and his team between now and the year's end.

The seventy-first session will be a special year for us all, not least because we will have the experience of working with two Secretaries-General. The search for the best possible candidate to fill the post is approaching its final stages. Once the selection process is complete, it will be important that we undertake an orderly appointment and a smooth transition to demonstrate the strength of our institutional stability. As the President of the General Assembly, I will dedicate myself to facilitating the transition process. I will be available at all times to assist the incoming Secretary-General settle into her or his responsibilities of office.

Throughout the seventy-first session, I will work to strengthen relations among the United Nations organs, continuing the practice of holding regular meetings with the Secretary-General, the Presidents of the Security Council and the President of the Economic and Social Council. I will inform the membership as to the scope of those meetings. In addition to upholding the principles of transparency and inclusiveness during the seventy-first session, I will seek to give greater prominence to ethics in the work of the United Nations.

As far as the Office of the President of the General Assembly is concerned, financial transparency will be maintained by ensuring that all contributions to the running of the Office are entered into the United Nations Trust Fund, where donors and expenditures will be public knowledge. In that regard, I thank the Governments that have contributed to date for their generosity and support for the work of the Office of the President in the seventy-first session.

I also thank the Governments and agencies that have seconded staff to the Office of the President for the seventy-first session. We have a large staff this year because of the appointment of a team specifically dedicated to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. That team has been put in place to fulfil the commitment I have made to achieving meaningful progress in all 17 Goals during the seventy-first session.

However, that commitment will not be delivered by the General Assembly alone, and in that regard I will work to strengthen the engagement of civil society and other actors in our overall work. I have heard and will respect the membership's desire for a calendar less crowded with high-level meetings and events. I am undertaking to look at creative ways for us to address the many pressing issues before us without crowding that calendar. We will strive to find new methods to sustain peace, to resolve entrenched conflicts, diminish the atrocities of global terrorism, better manage migrant and refugee flows and resolve the many humanitarian crises that remind us that millions of people in our world are still denied even the most basic conditions for a secure life.

I welcome the cessation of hostilities that has come into effect in Syria and call on all parties to honour the terms of the agreement. I sincerely hope that this understanding may ease the humanitarian suffering and lead to a lasting peace for the Syrian people.

The link between sustainable development, peace and security and human rights has never been more explicit. I will therefore encourage a heightening of human rights work of the General Assembly throughout the seventy-first session. Next week, for example, the world's leaders will come together for the high-level meeting on large movements of refugees and migrants. I regret the evidence of widespread lack of empathy for people on the move, many of whom are fleeing conflict, persecution or climate change. I congratulate those who are not shirking their responsibilities for decency. It is time to turn down the rhetoric of intolerance and ratchet up a collective response based on our common humanity.

There is much the seventy-first session must undertake in the area of peace and security. Building on the review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, including the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, we will act on improving the United Nations architecture to face those threats. In these troubled times, no community is immune to violent extremism and terrorism. We face this scourge together, and we must find the solutions together.

As the representative of a proud troop-contributing country these past four decades, I am fully aware that we must be diligent in coherently implementing the outcomes from last year's United Nations reviews on peacekeeping, peacebuilding and on women and peace and security, including through action in the Fifth Committee relating to the special political missions.

We must also look to take forward the implementation of the ambitious "sustaining peace" agenda agreed by the General Assembly and the Security Council earlier this year. Through the concept of sustaining peace, we have the opportunity to bring new coherence and coordination to our work across peace and security, development and human rights — our shared goal and responsibility for sustaining peace across the globe.

Reform of the Security Council is also a work at hand for the seventy-first session. The membership is unanimous in agreeing that reform is necessary to align the Council with the realities of the twenty-first century, not least of which will be the security consequences of climate change. The question is not whether reform is necessary, but how and in what form it will be achieved. And since reform is required in the best interests of the community of nations as a whole, it is therefore logical that the community as a whole

must move forward together in resolving reform. I am committed to facilitating that movement in the seventy-first session.

This time last year, we were gearing up for the Summit to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Like a lighthouse in a world dogged by despair and division, the 2030 Agenda came into existence, and we had a bright new beacon to light us out of the poverty and unsustainable practices that bedevil our planet. The 2030 Agenda has since had its foundations strengthened by the historic promise of the Paris Agreement on climate change. It has been heartening to observe the sincerity with which Governments and national planning agencies around the world have begun integrating the Agenda into national processes.

But make no mistake, the great majority of humankind has yet to learn of the Agenda. It has yet to embrace the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which, if successfully implemented, will bring an end to poverty and secure a sustainable place for humankind on our planet. It is for that reason that the theme of the seventy-first session is "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world". The seventieth session launched the SDGs, and for integrity's sake the seventy-first must be the one in which we witness the wheels turning on the implementation of all 17 Goals. I am committed to taking those Goals to the people, so that they can understand them as rights and responsibilities, as humankind's recipe for a sustainable world for them and their children. I wish to see us provide clear guidance through this year's quadrennial comprehensive policy review process in support of an efficient and integrated response through the United Nations system, so that we are confident that the system is up to the massive task of implementing the 2030 Agenda.

I will look to advance action to revitalize the agenda of the General Assembly and align it with that of the 2030 Agenda, and I will work closely with the President of the Economic and Social Council to ensure that the work of both organs is mutually reinforcing. I will also support a successful Habitat III conference in Quito in October, and I will work to deliver a truly game-changing outcome for the health of our oceans through the conference on Goal 14 to be held here at the United Nations in early June 2017.

As promised, I have formed an SDG implementation team within the Office of the President. I will work to advance a range of initiatives and events in collaboration with the membership of the Organization, the United Nations system, civil society, the private sector and others, aimed at getting the wheels of implementation turning. We must look at finance, education, outreach, partnership and resourcing. Throughout the seventy-first session, we will hold ourselves accountable for achieving that meaningful progress on each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to invite my two granddaughters, Grace and Mirabelle, to join me on the rostrum. They have flown all the way from the South Pacific to be with me on this day, and there is a reason I would like them to be with me while I say what I have to say to the Assembly. Grace is 7 years old and Mirabelle is 5. That means that when the remaining 14 years of the Sustainable Development Agenda have expired and the year 2030 is upon us, they will be young adults, ready to fulfil the potential of their lives. What kind of world will we have bequeathed them and all their brothers and sisters around the world, our own grandchildren and children, born and yet to be born?

Will it be a world where the projected loss of biodiversity on land and sea severely limits the possibilities of life, where atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide have gone well beyond the threshold of between 1.5° and 2° Celsius, thereby imperilling humankind's place on this planet? Will it be a world in which today's unsustainable patterns of consumption and production have spiralled out of control, where poverty, inequality and wretched governance have driven people to desperate acts of violence, migration and human degradation? Or will it be the world we envisage in the 2030 Agenda — a world of planetary prosperity, in which the scourge of extreme poverty has been eradicated; where food security and healthy lives are enabled and water and sanitation provided to all; where inequalities have been reduced in peaceful, inclusive, just, well-governed societies; and where women and girls are empowered, cities and settlements are safe and resilient and quality education is equitable and inclusive?

If humankind's will-power is strong enough, by 2030 this will be a world in which energy is sustainable and affordable for all, and where men and women will have decent work within resilient infrastructure,

sustainable industries and the limitless possibilities of innovation. People will live on a planet where we have taken the necessary action to combat climate change and restore terrestrial ecosystems, and where the cycle of decline in which the oceans are currently trapped has reverted to a maritime world free of pollution and the deleterious effects of acidification, once more enjoying healthy fish stocks and coastal ecosystems.

It goes without saying that it is towards such a better world that we must make our course, and I swear, on my love for my grandchildren, that I will do everything in my power as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session to keep the goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda on course and to ensure that the promised shores of a sustainable way of life on our planet will be achieved when the year 2030 comes around. The communal conscience of our generation will not rest easy until it is clear that we are going to achieve the SDGs. And the seventy-first session will fulfil its aims only if at its end we can be assured that real progress is under way on each of the Goals, that our faith and hope in progress are not misplaced and that a better world will be at hand by the year 2030. And I thank Grace and Mirabelle.

In its wisdom and dedication to the highest standards of governance, in fealty to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the membership of the United Nations has this year created a code of ethics for the presidency of the General Assembly. I applaud the results of those efforts, and I embrace the spirit and word of the code. In addition, members have decided that, for the first time in the history of the United Nations, and for all sessions henceforth, at the time of transition from one session of the General Assembly to the next, the incoming President shall take an oath of office. It is now my high honour to take that oath, within this historic fulcrum of the community of nations, witnessed by the appointed representatives of the nations and by the broad citizenry of humankind observing our proceedings today.

I now raise in my right hand the Charter of the United Nations and hereby affirm the prescribed presidential oath of office.

> "I solemnly declare that I shall truthfully perform my duties and exercise the functions entrusted to me as President of the General Assembly of the United Nations in all loyalty, discretion and conscience, and that I shall discharge these functions and regulate my conduct with the interest of the United Nations only in view and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the code of ethics for the President of the General Assembly, without seeking or accepting any instruction in regard to the performance of my duties from any Government or other source external to the Organization."

Closure of the seventieth session

The President: Before proceeding further, I would like to invite to the rostrum the President-elect of the Assembly at its seventy-first session, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, to hand over the gavel to him.

I declare closed the seventieth session of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.